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THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THEOLOGY

THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THEOLOGY.

THE

NATHANIEL WILLIAM TAYLOR LECTURES
FOR 1905

GIVEN BEFORE THE DIVINITY SCHOOL OF YALE UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Bible
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Biblical theology
†

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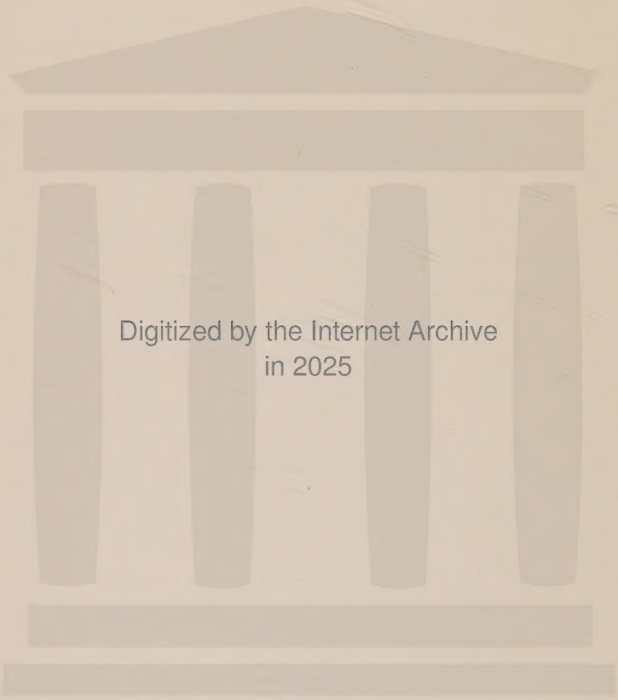

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PREFACE

THESE lectures were delivered before a school of Theology, but their purpose is popular, quite as much as it is professional. They are intended to serve as a help toward the right using of the Bible in present conditions, whether by students, by preachers, or by the people.

There is a widespread impression that modern studies upon the Bible tend to diminish, or even to destroy its value for the purposes of theology and religion. Against this impression these lectures utter a protest and offer reasons. The Bible continues to be the unspeakably precious treasure of Christendom, and will retain its place and power as the manual of Christianity and the book of God for men. But its place and power must be preserved through perfectly frank recognition of the facts concerning it, and use of it for exactly what it is. Modern study shows it to be in some important respects a different book from what it has been thought to be, and it is necessary that we learn to use it in a manner that corresponds to its character thus ascertained. Out of unbelief or fear concerning the future of the Bible, we must come to

a living confidence in the abiding value of our holy book, and to the practice of using it in the new manner which our new understanding of it requires. The road leads forward: return to old methods is impossible, and devotion to new methods that are now open to us is full of hope.

These lectures point the way toward the methods of the future, which the present needs at once to be taking as its own. Save that a few additions have been made, they are published as they were delivered, with no departure from the style of direct address. May He to whose service they are dedicated make them helpful to his children, often perplexed in the present controversies over the book that they hold dear and sacred.

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THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THEOLOGY

I

THE PROBLEM

THESE lectures on the use of the Scriptures in theology come forth from the experience of one who began his life fully inheriting the view of the Bible that was prevalent half a century ago; who has lived till now through the period of investigation and change, never an expert in biblical studies but always an eager watcher of the work; who has found himself borne on to a view of the Bible unlike that which he inherited; who has been called to construct a system of theology; who has used the Scriptures in that work with reverence and love, and in deference to a principle that seems to him both rational and Christian, though he might wish that he had done it better justice; who sees the Christian people sorely perplexed to know just what the Bible is and how it ought to influence their beliefs, now giving it

up as they need not do, now grasping it desperately by untenable arguments lest they lose it, now using it timidly and with weak reserve because they are uncertain of their hold; and who feels that the time has come for frank discussion of the manner in which, with present light, the Scriptures should be used in forming theological belief, whether in schools of divinity, in the pulpit, in the instruction of the young, or in the life of the private Christian.

The present hour will be spent in pointing out the problem that confronts us when we endeavor to form a theology by the aid of the Scriptures. The situation is the problem.

Let us imagine ourselves a company of theological revisers, sitting down as in the Jerusalem chamber at Westminster, to formulate our theology. We are Christians, and it is Christian theology that we are to bring into expression and order. The nature of our task is set before us in the definition of theology; and though we might define the term in various ways, probably we shall agree, in substance, that theology is the orderly presentation of what we have reason to hold as true concerning God and the relation of men to him. We shall treat many topics, but

they all centre here. God, man, the relations between the two, and what may follow therefrom, these are our themes. A true theology would be an orderly presentation of truth concerning these.

Before us lie the Scriptures, or the Bible. And what are these? The Scriptures are those writings, ever sacred among Christians as was the older part among the Hebrew people, in which is preserved the record of Hebrew and early Christian religion, with Jesus Christ and his gift to mankind as the crowning element. In the older part we find the long story of religion in the Hebrew race: the history variously told, the ancient laws, all attributed to God, the weighty words of prophets spoken in the name of God, the songs of religion, and the various other forms in which the sense of God expressed itself. But the specialty of the Bible is Jesus Christ. On these pages we have practically all that we know of his history and his words. He uttered the highest, simplest, most self-evidencing, most final body of truth concerning God and the relations of men to him that this world has ever received; and here we find it, together with writings that show how it was understood by receptive minds, and brought into life as a transforming power. A

rich and various treasure our Bible offers us, both in religion and in the history of religion; and as the crown of the whole we have the noblest view of religion that was ever known, opening out by the spiritual power of God into the finest life with God that was ever lived by men.

Evidently we must use the Scriptures in making our theology. Their theme is our theme. We treat of God in his relations with men, and they treat of the same, most clearly, luminously, divinely. For our purpose they are of the first importance, and we cannot dispense with their testimony. They must be used, and so used that their high contribution shall come into our theology with its utmost value.

And of course if they are to be used they must be used for what they are. This is the simple word of honesty. In using them we must rely upon no untenable theories or unprovable assumptions, either belittling or exaggerating their value. As a whole, and part by part, we must give them, and give them only, the weight to which their real value entitles them, whatever that may be. And our valuation of the Scriptures for theological use must be an intelligent valuation, based upon all that we have means of knowing about them.

Hence we must make it our business to know. Estimates of a former time may prove correct and adequate, and they may not, — that is for us to discover. First of all in our using of the sacred book is the oath of allegiance to truth and fact, the solemn and conscientious resolve that we will receive all knowledge about the Bible as it comes, and that whatsoever is established as fact and truth shall be allowed the force of truth in our theology. This seems an easy oath to take, for it is only the common vow of honesty; and yet it may not prove an easy vow to keep, for powerful influences from religion itself rise up to tempt us away from keeping it. Nevertheless so far as we have light we must use the Scriptures for exactly what they are. Only so can we look into the face of God when he asks us how we have sought to know the truth.

The problem is not for us alone, teachers and students in theology. It is for all people. Thus far there has been no book so influential as the Bible. All persons who feel religion to be a vital concern have some sort of theology, and all Christians look to the Bible as chief contributor to the theology which they should hold. Therefore they all need to use it rightly, and for just what it is.

By what process is the man in the street to be guided by the Bible in his theological convictions? What is that Bible which lies on every pulpit, gives the preacher his texts, and is the acknowledged guide of his religious teaching? How is it to be conceived, and how employed for his purpose? What is the book that is opened by every Sunday-school teacher for instruction of the young? and how should it be used? That these questions are not settled is plain to all. To-day there is a scholarly view of the Bible, and there is a popular view of the Bible, and they are an appalling distance apart. I am not thinking of the varieties into which each of these views is broken up. I mean simply that there is a popular religious view of the Bible, fairly recognizable and fairly well agreed upon, and that there is in like manner a well-accepted scholarly view, which is not the work of freaks or infidels but includes a mass of facts now known and certain. Between these two there is indeed an appalling difference, which nevertheless must some day be overcome. The problem is upon us.

It might seem too late in the day for a problem about the use of the Scriptures in theology to exist. They have always been used, and we might

think the right method must have been settled long ago by practice. But the problem lies in the nature of the case. A theologian must judge what his documents are, how he stands related to them, and in what manner they bring him truth. If we were the first makers of theology we should encounter this problem; as it is, we encounter it increased and intensified by our inheritance from the past.

We encounter a problem of the present time, for just now the question what the Scriptures are is answered in new ways, after new studies. If we are to use the Scriptures for what they are, it is very little to ask that we should put them in their chronological order and let them interpret themselves thereby. Modern study proposes a new chronological order, which makes the Bible partly a different book. It puts the various parts in new settings, and so changes their effect. This must be considered, and so must new testimony as to authorship and quality. And in general (for I cannot recount the items in detail) there has been a vast amount of intellectual work upon the Bible,—good work, by honorable methods, but work that yields for theology one-sided results. It is interrogative, critical, analytical. It is valuable, but its

first results are rather negative than positive. Apparently, the immediate and visible hold of theology on the Scriptures has been weakened rather than strengthened by the recent biblical study. Constructive work is beginning which will help theology again, but it is not yet very far advanced, and theology waits the final outcome. Just what the available biblical material is ultimately to be is not quite evident as yet. So our Bible is placed in our hands to-day with an open question.

But we inherit objections to the open question. The past hands us our Bible in a very definite fashion. When we take it up for our present task it comes to us consecrated, defined, and interpreted by long use, upon methods that have become as sacred as they are familiar. All religion is declared to be on the side of these principles and practices, and we are warned in the name of God not to depart from them. And yet it remains true that we must decide for ourselves, in our own best light. Must the modern knowledge be silent in the presence of sacred tradition, or must sacred tradition give way in the presence of modern knowledge? Or how are the genuine values in both to be preserved?

When we consider these ways in which the Bible has already been used in theology, it does not take us long to find that instead of solving our problem they intensify it. We inherit from practices that have embarrassed theology in the past and burdened it with perplexities in the present. That a practice is established and venerable is often taken to be a pledge of its value, whereas it may be only a chain that binds upon us a needless weight. Theology at present is struggling to be free from certain methods of using the Scriptures by which it has been prevented from coming to its best efficiency. It is part of our problem to know how to depart from practices that have become sacred and yet have done injury to our science.

A first question, if we are to use the Bible in theology, is whether we are to use it all. But question at once opens down into question. What is meant by "all"? How much is included in the Scriptures? Here is a question that obviously underlies our whole inquiry, but it is one to which scant justice has been done in the history of theology. From the old point of view, the question of the Canon is much more important than theologians generally have made it. Before the

Bible can rightly be used as theology has been wont to use it, its limits ought to be clearly defined and established: it ought to be shown exactly what books are set apart as sacred writings, and on what grounds these very ones are entitled thus to be distinguished from all others. To justify such use as has prevailed, there is need of a clear and conclusive doctrine of the Canon of Scripture, — a need that has been greatly overlooked. It is a very singular fact that Protestant theology has so steadily assumed the Protestant Canon as divinely authorized, when the current manner of using the Scriptures required it to be clearly proven. A part of the present problem results from this, for a sacred book is offered for our use, and we are asked to employ it in a manner that calls for more attention than has been given to the proof of its separateness from all other books.

But we will take the familiar book that lies before us, and return to our inquiry whether in theology we are to use it all. Is it an equal book, to be received as teaching us truth in all its parts? In Protestant theology it has been common to regard the Bible as a single source. That the Bible is a library, a collection, has indeed been always known, but the working

theory has rather been that the Bible is a book, available in all its parts for the service of theology. A statement by a biblical writer in any part of the book has been considered valid for theological use, and material has been gathered with equal hand from the entire range of the Scriptures. Of course it has been understood that passages must be interpreted, and the historical setting has not been wholly overlooked, but neither has it been sufficiently regarded. It has been assumed that anything in the Bible may be wrought into theology; nay, more, — that everything in the Bible must be wrought into theology. Since the whole Bible is the equal text-book, a satisfactory theology must work in all biblical statements. A system that left some biblical utterances outside, not accounted for in its scheme of thought, would be regarded as unsound and in need of revision. Theology must be scriptural, and to that end must ignore no thought expressed in the Scriptures.

In this the history of the Canon has been well forgotten, for in the forming of the Canon, of the Old Testament or of the New, the full equality of all the writings was never held. But that was a long time ago; and with the one sacred volume so

long in hand it is not surprising that the church has formed the habit of using it as alike throughout. In our present enterprise we have to decide whether this is still to be our practice. Upon the question itself we shall probably have little difficulty, for to-day every intelligent student knows that the ancient method is wrong. For the purposes of theology the Scriptures are not of equal value throughout. Some parts of the Bible contribute to theology as others do not. But this only opens our problem. Distinctions are to be made within the Bible, — that seems certain. It is my aim in these lectures to show what the right distinction is, but at present another point is before us. One serious part of our difficulty lies in the fact that we have to deal with a book that has been employed in this wrong way so long. The book that we open is saturated with effects from the long misuse. It has injurious traditions bound in with it, which threaten thus to continue the harm to theology which the long misuse has wrought. For theology is suffering heavily to this day from the consequences of treating the Bible as equal throughout for theological purposes. These consequences enter into our problem.

One injurious result is that even until now the

Old Testament has been given disproportionate weight in theology, and the New Testament has been deprived of its rightful primacy.

That the New Testament must have high primacy, if theology is to be Christian, needs no proof. In theory no one questions it. Christ stands first, worthy of the highest honor. The whole testimony of Christianity is to the effect that the Old Testament is excelled by the New, and in an important sense superseded by it. But when the whole Bible lies as one book before the framer of theology, with all its parts expected to contribute with equal right, the advantage of the Old Testament as contributor immediately appears. It is sure to offer more than its rightful share. It is the larger book. It is more pictorial in its modes of representation than its companion. It is more anthropomorphic, and more given to expressing truths by means of institutions. It thus excels in quick suggestiveness, and has a fascinating figurativeness of mode, appealing to taste for the typical and allegorical. Moreover, in spite of all its lofty passages, the Old Testament is less spiritual than the New, and therefore less exacting; for law, stern though it seems, is really far less exacting than spiritual life, and the re-

ligion that was before Christ demanded less of men than he requires. By its external and visible methods in representing the relation between God and men the Old Testament offers a less spiritual appeal, but one that strikes quickly into the likings of humanity. It has always been so interpreted as to provide a divine sanction for the spirit and practice of legalism; and legalism coming with divine credentials meets a ready welcome from human nature that loves it all too well, and finds the door into theology wide open. In a word, the Old Testament is such a book in comparison with the New that to over-exalt it is to unspiritualize theology. And as a matter of fact it has been over-exalted far. The third chapter of Genesis has been more influential upon the doctrine of sin than all the words and attitude of Jesus. The book of Leviticus has done more to give form to the doctrine of salvation than any single book of the New Testament. Legalism has entered theology through the open door, and found permanent lodgment in the doctrine of the Atonement. The book of Daniel, with the Apocalypse, its companion in pre-Christian type, has influenced eschatology so profoundly that the opposing views of the Fourth Gospel could not even be noticed.

Ethical perplexities coming over from the early books of the Old Testament have influenced the popular conception of God so deeply that Jesus' revelation of the Father could not have free course. Thus in many ways theology has been limited in its spiritual freedom through dictation from those Scriptures which Christ expressly threw into the background. If we are to build up Christian doctrine, we must find a better way of using the Old Testament than theology has usually followed.

The doctrine of an equal Bible has wrought a similar result within the New Testament. The words of Jesus have not been prized above those of his disciples.

When at the front of Christianity there stands One who is esteemed not only as God's messenger but as God manifest in the flesh, it would seem that the first question, far in advance of all others, must be, "What did the Master say?" But in theology the question has rather been, "What do the Scriptures say?" and every writer in the New Testament has been cited as representing the eternal truth just as really as the Lord. The Lord has not stood above the Scriptures, and the divine Master has not stood above his own

disciples. They all have been raised to his level. A disciple's view of Jesus has been esteemed just as authoritative as Jesus' view of himself, and a disciple's view of God just as authoritative as Jesus' view of God. An evangelist's interpretation of what Jesus said has been lifted to the level of the word interpreted. A mood and tense chosen by Paul for use has been taken to be just as revelatory of divine realities as the teaching of the Lord. This on the ground that the inspiration of God made the disciple-writers equal to the Word made flesh in witnessing to the truth, as all high doctrine of inspiration holds. But they never claimed such equality, and no one in their own time knew that they had it; and we can well imagine what the disciples, adoring Jesus as exalted to the right hand of God, would have said if they had known that their authority would one day be quoted as equal to his. I suspect they would have written nothing. How the teachings of the Master and the words of his disciples do really compare with one another, and how Christian testimony from secondary sources ought to influence our thought in theology, we must judge, and this enters into our problem. But we must seek to avoid the injustice to our

sources and the injury to theology that have come from equalizing the disciples with their Master, or the Master with his disciples.

In general it follows from the practice of using the Scriptures as equal throughout, that theology has been prevented from distinguishing the Christian element in the Scriptures from the other elements. Even more, — the doctrine of equality leads toward denial that there is such a thing as the Christian element there. Many a devout Christian would be deeply shocked at the mention of a Christian element in the Bible. A Christian element? then there must be elements in the Bible that are not Christian: and many lovers of the holy book would feel such a suggestion to be genuine profanity. The Bible is the book of Christianity, is it not? and must it not be all Christian? But we must talk of a Christian element in the Bible, if we are to talk of things as they are, and of elements that are not Christian. It is quite superfluous to prove this, as soon as we note what it means, that Christ came late in the period of Scripture-making. Between the Jewish and the Christian, Paul, as we know, recognized a tremendous difference, and if we fail to recognize the same it is only because

our eyes are blinded by tradition. If Paul could read our present Bible as it stands, he would have no difficulty in telling whether it was all Christian or not, or in distinguishing the Christian element amid large variety. It is the prime need of theology to distinguish the Christian element in the Scriptures from everything else that lies beside it there. Yet when we take up our Bible for use in theology we take up a book in which this sure distinction has become obscured by ages of practice, and the obscuring is commended and commanded by the very reverence which the sanctity of the book inspires. Of course such obscuring of a qualitative distinction works both ways to the injury of theology. It deprives the Christian element of that primacy to which the supreme rank of Christ entitles it, and it burdens theology with a mass of material that it ought not to be required to carry. When the pre-Christian matter in the Bible is raised to the level of Christ, there is forced into theology a body of incongruous thought that must confuse its judgment and keep its conclusions on too low a plane. Tradition has done theology a serious harm in the name of reverence for the Scriptures, and the question how to undo this injury is a part of our problem.

We may well wonder how this doctrine of equality in the Scriptures ever found an honorable standing. As I have said, the history of the Canon shows that it was no part of the idea in accordance with which the two collections were originally made. But aside from historical considerations, an intelligent reading of the Bible is enough to scatter the theory to the winds. If to-day we read the Bible straightforwardly in preparation for forming our theology, we shall find the inequality of it for theological purposes visible throughout. No specialist's eyes are required to discern it, for it lies on the very surface. We can account for the doctrine only by remembering that the Bible is in a way the least intelligently read of books. A Christian has usually read his Bible with the reverent assumption that it all comes directly from God to him. This prejudgment effectually blinds him to the inequalities, or assures him, if he observes them, that they must be only apparent. The pages of the Bible contain an amount of unnoticed facts that is perfectly amazing; and the spirit that declines to notice them is often the spirit of the deepest reverence. The ordinary reader daily slides over unnoticed facts enough to make a deep change

in his conception of the Bible if he observed them, and to compel him to read it as a different book. And when we pass beyond ordinary reading and inquire about the status of the doctrine of equality in the presence of modern knowledge of the Bible, the answer to our inquiry is short and decisive. In the light of what all scholars know, the equality of the Bible for the purposes of theology absolutely disappears. What ordinary intelligent reading suffices to show, that more thorough reading which we call criticism establishes beyond the possibility of doubt: and though to some ears the word criticism has an unspiritual sound, yet, after all, criticism is nothing but competent and candid examination. No one now has a right to draw upon the Bible for theology as if all parts of it could serve the purpose. Whatever we do, we must make distinctions in the Scriptures before we can use them in theology. What distinctions to make, and how to make them, is our problem.

The necessity suggests one worthy modern discipline, through which theology is struggling toward freedom in its use of Scripture. That discipline is Biblical Theology, which has for its object the differentiation of the theological thought

of the Scriptures into its component parts. It is a study of the facts, an examination into reality. It lays our Bible open before us as it is, for theological use. Its entrance to the field is a worthy sign that theology is aware of its problem and will not be content without a rational solution. Long ago some one said of Bruder's Concordance of the Greek New Testament, an unobtrusive but indispensable work, superseded only through progress in textual criticism, that it performed the service of pile-driving for theology. Similar value attaches to all sound and thorough biblical work, whether critical, historical, or analytical, and especially, perhaps, to the analytical work of Biblical Theology, through which general Christian theology is seeking the liberty and power which a right knowledge of its materials will afford. This fine science simply hands over to theology an unequal Bible, with its theological inequalities discovered, marked upon it, and classified for Christian wisdom to use. The vogue of Biblical Theology is the death of the doctrine of an equal Bible.

The doctrine of an equal Bible, as I have now described it, has never stood by itself constituting a whole. It has always been a part of the doc-

trine of a Bible equally authoritative throughout, or rather, the doctrine of Scriptures authoritative as Scriptures. As soon as we open our Bible as contributor to theology, we encounter the question whether, and how far, and in what sense, this body of writings is for us authoritative. In these lectures, as a whole, I hope to make plain what seems to be the truth concerning this matter. At this moment I am concerned only with the problem which our open Bible presents, and especially with the perplexing elements which long usage in the past has bequeathed to us; and to the doctrine of authority we are indebted for a part of the perplexing bequest.

When the Reformers rejected the authority of the church they accepted the authority of the Scriptures. Since their day it has been generally held by Protestants that the Scriptures as Scriptures are invested with full and final authority for theology, so that all genuine testimony of theirs on topics involved is to be received as certain and binding because it comes from them. There is no other voice on earth like theirs, for their voice is the voice of God. They hand over to theology their entire contents, to be accepted without question and wrought into the system

that is to be formed. Theology is not at liberty to decline their testimony, or to dissent from it. The equality of the Bible for theology means an equal and complete authority.

We well know how strong and urgent this doctrine has been. "What saith the Scripture?" has been the test question in theology, with the understanding that whatever the Scripture may have said is final. This understanding has been built in most firmly to the general Christian thought, so that the holding of any other view is still widely regarded as destructive to theology and treasonable to God. Yet the doctrine has not had so beneficent an effect as its reverent motive would lead us to look for. The doctrine of authoritative words ought to be accompanied by the practice of utmost diligence and intelligence in ascertaining what the words mean, for certainly we need to know exactly what it is that is taught us by divine authority. No other practice ought to be tolerated by those who hold the written words in reverence so high. Sometimes this requirement has been loyally fulfilled, but sometimes it has not, to the great injury of theology. The doctrine of biblical authority has very often been accompanied by the idea that the divine

meaning in the Word is spiritually simple, and any sincere soul can understand it; which has led to the claim that whatever any earnest Christian may have found in the Bible is of that divine substance which no one is at liberty to reject. This impression that the spiritual meaning is plain has led to the undervaluing of careful interpretation, and to a distinct prejudice against such means of interpretation as are not distinctly spiritual in their nature. Reverence for authority has thus been turned to the disparagement of scholarship. The same impression has led to much narrowness and uncharitableness of judgment as to what it is that all Christians are bound to believe on the authority of God. Thus the doctrine of authoritative Scriptures has not borne so high a quality or done so good a service as it ought, when its traditional methods were sanctified all along by genuine reverence for God in his Word.

The long use of the Scriptures upon this principle, as authoritative and final, has brought about a group of injurious consequences that enter into our present problem in theology.

If we are to receive our Scriptures as absolutely authoritative, we have first to assent to the

ground on which their authority rests. The doctrine of an equal and final authority stands, historically, upon the foundation of an equal and infallible inspiration. On no other foundation has it ever been supposed to stand. Not because these writers had authority of their own, not because they knew the truth so perfectly as to be entitled to think for us, has the Bible been regarded as authoritative in theology, but solely because the eternal Spirit gave to these writers truth and thought and words, and thus imparted his own infallibility and authority to what they wrote. On no other foundation could such an authority stand. But when we open our Bible to-day we open a book that is undergoing examination on the inductive method. Our generation is learning to read the Bible in the historical light, and let the book itself show what it is. We seek to discover how these utterances came to be made, and what they meant to the men who made them. The result is that the better we know the Bible in this manner, the less does it match the theory of an inspiration that imparts infallibility to all its statements, or even to all its utterances in the field of religion. There is no claim of such inspiration, and there is no

proof of it. The high doctrine proves untenable, and consequently it is passing out of sight. Those who hold it modify it so as really to destroy it, — for such a doctrine is intolerant of modifications, since it is nothing if not perfect. The high qualities of the Bible are of another kind, and the doctrine of an inspiration that imparts infallibility and direct divine authority to the entire body of the Scriptures is no more.

But out of the history of the matter it has come to pass that theology is burdened in the name of reverence for God with the weight of an untenable doctrine. To this day Christian theology is supposed to be grounded in the doctrine of an infallible inspiration. The outside world may be excused for understanding it thus, in view of the long-asserted claim of theology itself: but now the outside world has heard on good evidence that a sound theology cannot be built on such a foundation, since the doctrine is not true. Nevertheless on that foundation a large part of the Christian world continues insisting that theology must be built. Christianity itself, they affirm, stands or falls with infallible inspiration. I once knew a minister of high genius who said to me, "If I had to give up verbal inspiration, I should

have to give up Christ." One who had ever heard him pray knew better, for he had a spiritual foundation deeper and better than his theory; but except upon the most rigid theory of inspiration he supposed a Christian theology, and even a Christian faith, to be impossible. That belief is still abroad in power, and the hurtful reputation of it is abroad also. If we propose a Christian theology we shall be expected by a multitude of outsiders to ground it in infallible inspiration, on which they know that we cannot build a structure that will stand; and at the same time we shall be required by a multitude of Christians to ground it in the same, where we know that we cannot build safely. Not only so, but we shall be expected to prove the doctrine. Thus theology is burdened with a task that cannot be performed, and the ill name of a theory that cannot be defended, and unbelievers are encouraged in their impression that a valid Christian theology is impossible.

By the doctrine of a finally authoritative book another burden has been placed upon theology, of which the weight has not yet ceased to be felt, although it is beginning to pass away. That burden is the task of so interpreting the Bible

that it shall agree with itself. Of course an authoritative book will agree with itself. Its statements, probably everywhere and certainly in the field of religion, will be free from contradictions. If they seem to differ, it must be assumed to be no more than seeming, and interpretation must be relied upon to reconcile the differences. This is a long-established view of the Bible. How many books have been written on biblical difficulties, to vindicate the Bible as divine by showing that it nowhere contradicts itself, — no, not even as to details of history or incidental statements of fact! Especially on the matters that enter into theology must the Bible speak in unison. Its voice is the voice of God, and its utterance must be one; and the interpreter must find the unity which certainly must be there. This reasoning is good. Absolute authority must be accompanied by unity of teaching. But what a work to lay upon an interpreter or a theologian, — to interpret so large and various a book as the Bible into unanimity! It is a very large undertaking. Perhaps it cannot be done by fair means, and yet it must be done. Any failure, leaving a discrepancy unreconciled, can only stand as a difficulty unremoved where difficulties may be fatal, a rock

on which a whole system of theology may go to ruin. And as to the process itself: is it not a strange and anomalous thing that a theologian should be set to harmonize his authoritative material? Does it seem likely that a divine standard will need interpreting into unity? And is it really a high process, consistent with true reverence for a divine standard, to be interpreting it with the preconceived intention of bringing its statements into agreement? We do not so elsewhere. Honest interpretation of other writings takes them as they are, and lets them mean whatever they may say: indeed, honest interpretation may almost be said to consist in doing this. But theology has long been expected to interpret its Scriptures into unanimity, and even into assertion of a scheme of thought accepted in advance as representative of their teachings. The process is not a high one, and theology stands at a serious moral disadvantage because of this legacy from the doctrine of an authoritative Bible. Somehow we must clear ourselves from this complication, and use our Scriptures for what they are and what they mean, free from the morally damaging assumption that they must always agree with themselves.

All the more because of one outcome that is not always recognized by those who most need to be aware of it. There is a strange magic about the work of interpreting a book with which one feels bound always to agree. The process is not favorable to the ascertainment of truth. If a man is in duty bound to agree with a book, the surest and shortest way is to make the book agree with the man. This is not difficult. The book is inactive, but the man is alive. It may be hard to bind the convictions of a living man into harmony with the teachings of a silent page, but it is easy to interpret the silent and helpless page into harmony with the convictions of a living man. The temptation to this is natural, subtle, and almost irresistible. A man of strong views does it before he is aware of the desire to do it: the deeper his convictions, the more urgent is the temptation. The experienced interpreter who has never noticed this strong temptation has probably failed to analyze his own mental processes. In fact there are great difficulties about learning what an author means, as long as one feels obligation to agree with him at every point. Only free interpretation interprets. But for centuries theology has been handling the Scriptures under all the disadvantages

that attend interpreting with duty to agree. It is hard to believe that God requires or desires this at our hands. He would certainly give theology the benefit of all that would render natural and sure the right understanding of its chief source; and plainly we must seek honorable exemption from the strong temptation to make the Scriptures agree with us.

From the use of the Bible as authority theology has received another injurious legacy, — the proof-text method.

The proof-text method came naturally. If all is solidly divine, of course a citation is a proof. So in the books of theologians and the footnotes of creeds it is common to find the statement of a doctrine followed by a list of Scripture references, offered as sufficient evidence that the statement is true. Sometimes the selection has been made with skill and understanding, and sometimes not. Not so very long ago the traditional practice followed the logical inference from equal inspiration, and took the whole Bible for choice of proof-texts, with the result of some strange groupings and some strange proofs. The method is retiring from use, but has not yet wholly withdrawn its effects. We know that it does not rest on facts, and therefore cannot

yield good results. The various books of the Bible are not of such nature as fairly to yield themselves to such use. We cannot reach right results by citing proof from Ezekiel or Ecclesiastes or the books of Samuel beside words of Paul or the Lord himself. Only by claiming equal authority for all these sources could we defend such a practice, and such a claim we cannot maintain. Texts are not all authoritative, nor indeed, as I hope to show, is the divine message given us chiefly in the form of texts. But we open a Bible that has long been offering its every page alive with texts to prove our statements: and what, we ask ourselves, is that better method which is to take the place of this?

From long use of this kind it has come to pass that the Bible is by no means an easy book to quote with certainty of its right meaning. When we open it there spring out great numbers of suggested meanings about which we shall act rashly if we take them as correct. Under the influence of the idea of direct authority the Scriptures have been used in the interest of edification, until various non-natural modes of interpreting them have become established and traditional, and sacred too. Texts have come to have an atmosphere about them. They carry a sense of

quality, which may correspond to their proper meaning and may not. When we use them it is not quite certain what we are using.

For ages, we know, the leading use of the Scriptures has been to draw profitable lessons from them. The purpose is right, I need not say, but more must be said of the process. Reverence has led to the assumption, expressed or implied, that the Bible must contain everything that the soul can need for its spiritual sustenance. As old as the days of Alexandrian Judaism is the idea that the true wisdom of all wise men must be contained in the book of God, and be discoverable there. Accordingly all has been sought there; the largest meaning must be the real meaning. We may almost say that the Scriptures have had more read into them than read out of them. Into the older Scriptures the meaning of the later has been read, the gospel into the Old Testament, as a matter of course and a Christian duty. On every page of the Bible the name of God has been read with its full Christian significance in mind. Into all the Scriptures theological systems have been read without hesitation. Texts once brought into association with doctrine have been assumed to have been written for proof of doctrine. Allegorizing

is gone now from intelligent circles, but ages of it have left a coloring upon the biblical narrative and a remnant of habit in the general Christian mind. Typical meanings, often groundless, have turned attention away from good historical sense. Homiletical use might be counted upon to help in the understanding of the sacred words, but in many ways preaching, with all its value, has been a foe to the Scriptures. It has crammed them with lessons, putting lessons in where none ought to be found, and ready always to err in favor of finding the larger lesson. It has suggested that the Scriptures are to be understood only through a kind of professional practice. It has familiarized all sorts of doubtful exegesis, and given wide currency to edifying misinterpretations. It has made mistranslations to be cherished as too precious for correction, if only they yielded edifying texts and enshrined some profitable truth. The simple, straightforward, historical interpretation of the Scriptures has been kept out of its rightful place by reverence for edifying, holy words, maintained under the influence of preaching. Moreover, attention in the reading of the Bible has come to be confined to certain aspects of the book and turned away from others. It has

been reverent attention to the Bible as a book of lessons, with astonishing inattention to facts that would alter the lessons if they were noticed. Texts have thus obtained a familiar and consecrated meaning, to be uttered only with solemnity, but it may not be the true meaning at all. Consequently if we attempt in theology to use the sacred words by way of proof, they come to us full of suggestiveness for spiritual purposes, but of a suggestiveness which we cannot safely trust. The meaning that they bring to mind is partly in the words themselves, and partly an accumulation from reverent but uninquiring use. They may be very far from proving what they seem to prove, and our theology may suffer loss of truth if we take them as they appear. Even if a proof-text method were a good method in itself, it could not be successfully employed now, since the texts of the Bible have suffered such serious though unintended distortion. One thing is certain. Theology must seize upon the help of criticism and history and exegesis and all else that can show what the Bible really means. But no one of these has a word to say in favor of continuing in the old, easy, superficial proof-text method which has come from taking the Scriptures as authoritative through-

out. Theology has a deeper and harder work to do.

Out of all this has come another condition most hurtful both to theology and to the efficiency of religion. With such a view of inspiration and authority as has prevailed, it was quite inevitable that questions about the Bible should obtain a disproportionate degree of prominence. Points of no intrinsic importance for the moral and spiritual life have been elevated to the highest rank and insisted upon as vital and decisive. Hosts of good men confound criticism with Christianity. To this very hour multitudes of Christians hold it essential to sound Christianity to believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that there was only one Isaiah, and that the story of Jonah is historical. Questions about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and even of the Pastoral Epistles, are still regarded as lying within the region of sceptical doubt. The pulpit is not free to the using of the Bible in its ascertained character, and thus ambiguities remain and false impressions are perpetuated. So conscience is embarrassed by the application of false tests, and spiritual life, as well as intellectual activity, is guided in artificial channels and restrained from its proper freedom. And all this is going on at a time

when the living questions are such questions as whether Christianity is able to elevate the ideals of common life, to check the overweening power of money, to limit self-indulgence, to bring in a high standard of honesty, to protect the family from disintegrating influences, to diminish drunkenness and the social evil, to rescue the lost part of the community, to commend religion to all souls, to condemn and banish war, to create confidence in righteousness as a living power, to establish brotherly kindness as the law of life, and whether Christians have any power to come together in effective unity for these large Christian purposes. This is the world in which we live. These vast questions are settling themselves, partly through default of attention on the part of Christians, while the Christians are dividing among themselves and distrusting one another over the manner in which they ought to understand and use the Bible. Both for theology and for religion it is necessary that we get into a position in which the large things shall be at the front and the minor matters in the rear. We must find a method of using the Bible that will put a stop to the magnifying of questions about the Bible itself above judgment, mercy, and the weightier matters of the gospel.

One serious element in our problem remains to be considered. When we sit down together as I have proposed, to put into form the truest theology that we can find, really the first question is that of our own function. What are we to do? How is the theologian related to his materials? Are we to be contributors to the result, or not? Are we called to think theology out under the influence of the Scriptures, or to receive it from them in solid form? Is the Bible our inspirer, or our dictator with power of veto? Are we merely expounders of a final authority, which says, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther," so that we must accept all biblical testimony as to religious truth, and never dissent therefrom or add thereto? or have we some more independent function, some call to bring to the result something of our own?

The logic of the matter is plain. If the book as a book is absolutely authoritative, a theology that truly reproduces the book is final, and in the construction of it there is no room for anything from other sources. If the Bible stands as the sole and sufficient rule of faith, in the sense that as a unit it brings God's direct instruction, then it may be expected to yield a clear theology, and a theologian may neither dissent from that theology nor

add to it anything of his own. All through the history of Christian theology there has been an underlying claim to this effect, and often a claim distinctly formulated. The Bible is unquestionably the main source of Christian theology, and many hold, or think they hold, that it is the only source. Students have often come to me with this idea, supposing that the theologian's calling was simply to gather out, classify, and express what the Scriptures contain on his subject. In this it is assumed that the Scriptures yield a system, and the system carries with it their authority, which is the authority of God. Doctrine is inspired, theology is revealed from heaven. I remember a book entitled "Revealed Theology." The theologian is only an interpreter, a voice, adding nothing to the utterance.

Perhaps the idea that the Scriptures yield a theology which binds the theologian should receive a word of exposition. It has commonly been assumed that the Bible contains the whole of Christianity, and has upon its pages all the views or interpretations of Christianity that have a right to exist. This is no accident; it has been arranged by the inspiring wisdom of God. It is true that there are different points of view within

the Bible: in addition to what the Synoptics contain there is a Pauline gospel, and a Johannine, and there are other conceptions besides. But these are authorized views of the gospel: moreover they are harmonious and complementary views, which can be combined into a consistent whole; and this biblical whole is identical with the whole of Christianity. In effect, Christianity is to be brought forth from the Bible as gold is dug out of a mine. It is all there, and the various forms in which we find it there have been so constructed and brought together by the God who made the Bible as to include all that Christianity can ever include. If with our generation we have occasion to inquire what Christianity is, we shall meet with this reply, that Christianity is the sum-total of the biblical teaching, which alone is authorized teaching, to be discovered by combining into a solid unity the conceptions of Christ and his revelation that were placed within the Bible in order that they might complement one another into a consistent whole. Thus by discovery and reconstruction of a foreordained theological unity in the inspired word there is found a theology that comes to the finder with the authority of God.

The positive aspect of such a doctrine is that

the Scriptures, as Scriptures, require theological assent: the negative, that they hold a rightful power of veto. "Hitherto but no farther" is their genuine word. We are all familiar with the deep distinction that has been drawn in theology between results of biblical interpretation and results of human speculation: what comes from the Scriptures by interpretation is divine and sure; what comes by speculation, or human thinking, is on an immeasurably lower level, — it is purely human, uncertain, probably unwarranted, possibly sinful. To differ from the Scriptures is forbidden, to add to their testimony is profane, to seek sound theology by speculating beyond them is to attempt the impossible, and unworthy of a reverent child of God. A theologian is simply in a broad sense an exegete, who sins if he tries to be more, for no human mind is competent to add to the substance of theology, beyond that which the Bible directly gives. In this I am quoting a long-established view of the theologian's office. I have known theologians most conscientious and true who held this conception of their calling, which from their point of view was certainly the logic of the situation.

But logic and life are not the same. The

theory that the Bible is dictator with veto power breaks down completely in practice, however devoutly it may be accepted. It has never been consistently acted upon, and yet it has not been frankly abandoned. It calls for a theology constructed solely from the biblical material, with no human speculation added. But that is impossible. On neither side is the theory workable.

On the one hand, the Scriptures do not yield a single clear theology to which full divine authority attaches. As to the idea of the Bible just mentioned, that it contains the only authorized conceptions of Christianity, and holds these so prearranged by inspiration as to complement one another and contain Christianity entire, it is one of the *a priori* theories, made in advance of examination. Examination would never suggest it, and is sufficient to disprove it. There is no evidence that such prearranged completeness exists, or was ever intended by the divine will. No one has ever told us by authority that the interpretations of Christianity contained within the Bible are the only permissible interpretations. It simply cannot be shown that by God's will we are limited to these, or that these theologies, so to call them, combine into a single, complete, and

harmonious system that can be identified with Christianity. When we take the Bible for what it is, and let it bear its own testimony, it does not give forth that dictating theological product for which the theory calls.

And on the other hand it is not possible for a theologian to avoid thinking, or to refrain from working his thoughts into his system. A living man cannot be prevented from making his contribution. Nor indeed, when one thinks of it, can a reverent spirit readily believe that God has ever intended to put a veto upon fresh and independent thought on the themes that enter into theology. To the sea he may have said, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther," but not to the soul that is seeking to know the truth. If God has here in the Bible given truth that no more truth may be given, and granted light that no more light may be granted, this is the only place where he has acted so. Usually truth is given for seed, with the intent that harvests beyond measure shall spring from it. The fulness of the Christian light is given in Christ, we may be sure, in order that the loyal-hearted may see for themselves thereby, as far as thought can reach. Practically, there are obstacles of every

kind in the way of acting as if the Scriptures claimed to dictate the whole of theology and veto the contribution of the theologian.

It is no wonder that the theory has so completely broken down in practice. It is true that many a man has supposed himself to be framing a theology coextensive with the divine testimony in the Bible. Many a man has labored to that end with a pathetic conscientiousness, and sometimes one has reverently thought that he had succeeded. But in vain. A man with systematizing genius enough to undertake such an enterprise has too much to succeed with it. Speculation is absolutely unpreventable. Though one bow to the Scriptures with perfect loyalty, the speculative element comes in as soon as he begins to think out their meaning and set their testimony in order. No speculation, no system, even though the subject-matter be accepted on authority. No man ever exactly reproduced the Bible in theology, or stopped making theology when he had reached the end of his biblical material. No man indeed ever thought over again the precise thoughts of Paul, or of any other biblical writer: far less has anyone ever gathered up the thought of them all. But there is no need of trying to prove the

point, for all such endeavor is rendered superfluous by the mention of the great theologians. These, what have they done? Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Arminius, Edwards, Taylor, Hodge, — were these mere biblicists? Were they even chiefly biblicists? They were all great thinkers, reasoners, philosophizers, systematic organizers of thought. They wrought under the influence of the Scriptures, but under that influence each of them thought theology out, and formed his system under the impulse of his own genius. Some of them held the teaching of the Scriptures to be absolutely binding, and distrusted speculation; but no one of them refrained from reasoning upon the teaching of the Scriptures, or from working into his theology the best and utmost that his rational powers could do. The idea that the Scriptures authoritatively dictate the whole contents of theology has never been vindicated by experience, and their assumed veto upon speculation and human contribution to the body of doctrine has never been regarded in practice, even by those who devoutly believed in it. For this inconsistency no one is to blame, since the necessity for it resides in the nature of the human soul.

Nevertheless, the theory of dictation and veto continues influential, and the resulting perplexities for the conscientious theologian constitute a part of his problem. The doctrine has waned in some theological circles far more than in others. Moreover, it has waned far more in practice than in theory. High claims for the Scriptures as supreme authority still remain, where the acting upon them has greatly diminished, — a fact that puts theology more or less in a false position, and invites distrust. The whole situation to-day urges upon us with much force, when we begin to theologize, the question how we are related to the Bible. As we sit down together for our work, are we bound to accept all biblical statements on the themes of theology and work them into our system? Must we consider ourselves limited to what the Bible provides us? Are we at liberty to dissent from biblical statements? Are we in any true sense judges of the value of biblical statements? If we have any liberty in the matter, on what ground shall we claim it? If we are not in the old position, then in what position are we?

It is high time to give an intelligent answer to these questions, and to do it openly and di-

rectly. Honesty requires us to abandon some of the old ways of using the Bible. Abandonment is easy enough, comparatively, but it is not sufficient to satisfy the honesty that requires it. Mere cessation from old ways leaves the right method of use still undetermined, and it leaves large parts of our material waiting for us to decide what use of them we ought to make. We need a principle for use of the Scriptures in theology, as clear and definite as the old, and more tenable. For a while we may manage to make shift without it, but not for long, for uncertainty as to the principle is not favorable to that straightforwardness which honesty demands. In a time of change, the great danger to sacred interests is the danger of insincerity. The preciousness of sacred things may easily induce us to hold fast what intelligence requires us to surrender or to change. Then we shall soon be found holding positions that we first suspect and then know to be untenable, and defending them by arguments that we do not inwardly trust as sufficient or as valid, — and all this lest holy interests should suffer from our doing otherwise. Since this cannot be done in a corner, we shall find ourselves and our methods distrusted by honest

men, and the sacred interests that we sought to safeguard exposed to new dangers by our fault. This sore temptation of a time of change is upon theology to-day, in its relation to the Scriptures. The time has come for frank discussion of the problem, for open acknowledgment that the old position is untenable, and for unreserved inquiry for a better method. It is because the time for such work has come, that I have laid the problem before you in the present hour.

I venture to think that there is a principle, clear, sound, and applicable to the whole subject, by which we can come to the right use of the Scriptures in theology. To the presentation of this principle the next hour will be given.

II

THE PRINCIPLE

I HAVE spoken of the complicated situation in which we find ourselves when we sit down together to use the Scriptures in forming our theology, a situation which is our problem. The Scriptures are handed to us new by modern scholarship: they are read in the light of linguistic studies, history, archæology, criticism, analysis, reconstruction, and without reference to the ancient idea of inspiration. At the same time they are still delivered to us also by the past, with the atmosphere of long reverential use about them. We are asked, and more than asked, to use them as equal and authoritative throughout. From the past they come to us bearing a burden of harm to theology through long misuse; with their inferior parts raised to the rank of the highest, with the long habit of falling apart into texts instead of standing as masses, with plain historical significance lost in other meanings, with various misinterpretations wrought into their substance, and with

a right of dictation and veto attributed to them which has never proved effective in practice, and which we cannot show that they rightfully possess. Meanwhile we find that the ground for the ancient manner of use, in the doctrine of an equal and infallible inspiration, is gone. We know that it is our duty and our high privilege to use these writings in the forming of our theology, but how? I have ventured to say that there exists a principle, clear and sound, that leads to the solution of the problem.

The principle is, that the Christian element in the Scriptures is the indispensable and formative element in Christian theology, and is the only element in the Scriptures which Christian theology is either required or permitted to receive as contributing to its substance.

I venture to think that this statement has a self-evident sound, — to Christian theology the Scriptures contribute their Christian element and nothing else. It seems to need little proof: it proves itself to the listening ear. I am sure that it is all implied in the two definitions with which we began, the definitions of theology and the Scriptures. Let me recall them. Theology is the orderly presentation of what we have reason to

hold as true concerning God and the relations of men to him; and the Scriptures are those writings which preserve the story of Hebrew and early Christian religion, with Jesus Christ and his revelation concerning God and man for their crowning element. For us Christians theology and the Scriptures, thus conceived, are manifestly inseparable, and the point at which they meet is plain. They meet in Christ. He is the common possession of the two — he and what he contributes — and he is their common glory. He is the crown of the Old Testament and of the New, and the crown of the Bible as a whole; and in the field of theology there is none that compares with him in clearness of revelation or in fulness of light and truth. If he has made theology to be Christian, it is equally true that he has made the Scriptures to be Christian. To either there is none like him.

Now concerning Jesus Christ the primary fact is that his revelation is true. That is to say, he has shown God as he is, in his character and relations with men. He has represented life in its true meaning, and opened to us the real way to genuine welfare and success in existence. What he has made known commends and proves itself as true by the manner in which it fits into the human

scheme, meets human need, and renders thought rational and life successful. God eternally is such a being as Jesus represents him to be, — this is the heart of Christianity, to be apprehended not first in thought but first in life and love; and this is forever true. And it is a revelation never to be superseded, but forever to be better and better known. So Jesus Christ brings into the Bible, and into theology, as he first brought into life, a body of everlasting truth. This the Scriptures and theology receive in common from him.

But notice in what different positions Christ and his contribution stand in relation to the two. To him the Scriptures tend, and from him theology proceeds. In the Bible a long course of life, revelation, and experience culminates in Christ: in theology a long course of experience, reflection, and development comes forth from Christ. Practically Christ stands at the end of our Bible and at the beginning of our theology. When the Founder of the Christian faith enters to the Bible there is very much there that lies behind him. When he enters to theology the whole scope and movement of the work lies before him.

That is to say, the Scriptures contain that indispensable material without which theology would

not be Christian or rise to the height of truth, and they contain a great deal more. Speaking in terms of time we can say that they contain a Christian and a pre-Christian part; speaking in terms of quality, that they contain a Christian and a non-Christian element. Of what character the non-Christian part is, or the pre-Christian, we do not tell by giving it the name; that remains to be discovered. What is pre-Christian, or non-Christian, may lie close upon the spiritual borders of Christianity, or may be far removed from the Christian view of things: Christ may have superseded it by completion, or by contradiction. These are not matters for assumption, but for inquiry. The point to be held fast and for certain is that the Bible does bring us the contribution of Christ together with much that did not proceed from him; and this besides, that the difference between these two elements is not necessarily a difference in time, though it is partly that, but is a difference in quality. The great word Christian is not merely a term that belongs on one side of a time-boundary: it is a descriptive and qualitative term, with a meaning in itself. There certainly is non-Christian matter in the Old Testament, and for aught that we know there may be in the New. In either place

the question is one of spiritual quality, character, kinship with the revelation that we have in Christ.

Now return a moment to the principle. It is the Christian element in the Scriptures that must be received as constituent matter into our theology, for it is indispensable and formative there. But non-Christian matter contained in the Bible need not, and must not, be so received. Christian theology has deep interest in such matter, and may employ it helpfully for historical illustration, a use for which it has inestimable value. But nothing that is not Christian in its genuine quality has any place in our Christian theology, even though we may have read it on the pages of the Bible.

This principle for the use of the Scriptures contains nothing new, neither is it a principle that can be contradicted or set aside. That the Bible contains the revelation of Christ and more has been known ever since the Bible was completed. The Sermon on the Mount affirms it, and Paul insists upon it. No Christian student would think of denying it. Yet as a measuring and testing fact the presence of diverse elements in the Bible has never yet come to its due place in theology, and still less in the popular thinking. It has not been unused, indeed, as a test of beliefs, but it has

never yet been allowed to do its work without restraint. The doctrine of an equal Bible, as I have said, has kept it in bondage. So it remains for our time, and for us as theologians, to separate the Bible into its diverse elements, in order that the Christian element in its full glory may be received alone to influence in theology. This is that rule of simplicity and certainty which theology has been seeking but has never fully found; and both the schools and the people need to take it honestly into use and allow it to do its clarifying work.

But the principle calls for some defining, and for the answering of some questions which it suggests. Just what is the Christian element? Where in the Bible is it to be found? How much does it include? How is it to be distinguished and identified? Who is to select it? Are there clear marks upon it? How shall we know when we have gathered it all? Perhaps we may not find a short and easy definition, but these questions can be answered.

It might be thought that the Christian element in the Scriptures consisted of the words of Jesus, or was coextensive with the record of his life. Or it might be identified with the New Testament,

the part of the Bible that was written by Christians. But the test already proposed, of character and quality, is more internal and searching than any such test of localization or measurement. What is Christian is such by reason of its relation to that which Christ signifies or stands for, but the relation lies deeper than considerations of time or immediate origin. It lies in the material itself, and is a relation of likeness, or moral unity. Let this be our standard: — That is Christian which enters into or accords with the view of divine realities which Jesus Christ revealed.

This is by no means a statement that means little or nothing. Critics often tell us that we know much less about Jesus than we thought we knew, and some of them think that we know very little about him. But though it may prove indeed that some of our inherited knowledge of him needs to be corrected, we can yet say without fear that the chief thing about him we know very well. We know his large significance in the human world, and the substance of his message to us men. What view of God and man he stood for, what he made religion to be, what good he offered to mankind, and what gift of truth and life actually flowed forth from him into the common lot,

this we know; and this we know on such evidence that we are sure the knowledge will not be taken away from us. This is the great thing to know concerning Jesus Christ. If we had forty Gospels instead of four, and knew his life in minute detail, and could read volumes of his words instead of pages, and understood the mystery of his person through and through, but knew not what light upon divine realities he gave, we should not know him as he is, or as truly as we know him now.

What then is this ascertained and sure significance of Jesus Christ, which is never to be changed and which no future modifications of our knowledge can abolish for us? From him there came forth the clearest, simplest, worthiest, and truest view of God and the relation of God to men that has existed in this world; and in him there has proved to be inexhaustible power to establish that right relation between God and men in actual life. There is no doubt or mystery as to what his revelation was, and is. He has sent forth living truth concerning God, and has made it to live in men.

As to this view of God which constitutes the revelation of Jesus Christ, it is necessary that just here we set it before us in few words. It is as

simple as it is practical and glorious. It is a revelation made in life. When Jesus lived in perfect filial fellowship with God and called his disciples to do the same, he was making God known as One who is worthy to receive filial confidence and love from all souls, and available for all who will to live with him as his children. He assumed in God the reality of all that men need to find in him. A God for men to love, to trust, and to adore, a God who hates evil and desires to save men from its control, a God of free, forgiving grace, a God to whom men are precious and who seeks them in love that he may make them what they ought to be, a God, indeed, whose holy love is expressed in the love of Christ himself which goes to death in order that it may save, — such a God Jesus has manifested and commended to our faith and affection. A God too who claims as well as loves, who holds his children strictly to the spirit of their Father, who insists that a man shall love not only him but his neighbor, who is to be served by serving men and honored by doing righteousness, who makes human service and fellowship an element in divine religion, and so blesses all in blessing each, — such a God is he. And since there is such a God of free unpurchased grace, Jesus gives

us to know that though men are sinful they need not continue so, though they are sorrowful they need not remain uncomforted, though they are harming their fellows they can be transformed into a power to bless. Out of their evil living they can be brought into such filial life with God as Jesus lived.

Thus Jesus is the revealer of God, and is also in a true sense the revelation of God. What he the visible friend and Saviour is to men, that God is also, invisible but real and now revealed: and God is this to sinful men because of what he is in himself, essentially and forever. Thus the work of Jesus is revelation, the showing of God in the character in which men may conceive of him and avail themselves of his being. It is the manifestation of a character which men have never clearly known in God. And in Jesus there is more than revelation, there is power, — or, to speak more truly, his revelation is not an utterance but a work: it moves in the realm of power, and not of mere ideas. By the operation of a divine spiritual energy the gospel of new life that he proclaimed is realized in life. It is the power of God unto salvation. The Spirit divine, ever abiding, inspiring, and transforming, fulfils the

work that Christ proposes. By his influence truth is transmuted into life, and men are brought into fellowship with God in such life as Jesus lived. This is revelation in life, conveyed through experience. In pursuance of the work of Christ God was experienced and therefore conceived — not conceived and therefore experienced — in the character and relation that Jesus has revealed. Life made doctrine, life made the New Testament, life made Christian theology; and the life was life in which God was to men, in their measure, what God was to Jesus, and what Jesus was to men.

In this light the Christian element, or the gift of Christ, is not a body of words, or even a body of thoughts, but a body of truth. Concerning God and men, it is not only a view expressed, but a conception realized. It is a relation brought to be fact, a reality fulfilled through spiritual power. I have often found students unable to grasp the distinction between a body of truth and a body of thoughts, or even of words. They had always thought of truth as expressed in words, and of the most exact wording as making the best expression. But the Christian body of truth is a body of spiritual reality put into life. Until we make this view of Christ's gift our own, we shall

not rise to the spiritual clearness of the true faith, or appreciate the true glory of theology.

Is there now any need of explaining what is meant by saying that the Christian element in the Scriptures is indispensable and formative in theology, and nothing else from the Scriptures should be admitted to a place beside it? I think the meaning must be plain. The view of God and life which Jesus Christ brought into effect is true: God and life are such as he has shown us. This vital conception is what Christian theology is made of. This Christian theology is to take, unfold, interpret, apply, and carry to its conclusions. This and spiritually sound conclusions from it form the bulk of Christian theology. Christ's view of God and the relations of men to him is to be received as the formative truth, and bring in all truth which it implies, and exclude all doctrine that cannot live with it in spiritual harmony. Then God will be represented only in the character in which the Christian message sets him forth, and the general field of theology will be filled with doctrine that proceeds from this view of God by congenial development and stands in spiritual unity with it. Conceptions of God that conflict with this will be banished, and with

them will go all inferences and conclusions from them. If any proposed doctrine contradicts the large meaning and spirit of Christ, of course Christian theology must have none of it. If any is similar to the Christian view but inferior, less conformed to the one true character, Christian theology may thankfully note the service it has rendered, but must not rank it with that which excels. If any proposed doctrine comes by inference from some view of God that is inconsistent with that of Christ, and implies that God is other than as he has revealed him, the doctrine is no truer or better than its source, and must be excluded. Nothing may rank with that which Christ has directly given, except that which belongs with it by true affinity. If from within the Bible itself the inferior matter has been gathered, that makes no difference. Discovery on sacred pages is no reason why non-Christian matter should be called Christian and embodied in Christian theology. Christian theology must be all Christian. If it is not so yet but still needs Christianizing, the way is plain. Give the Christian view of God free scope, and allow it to banish all that contradicts it.

With this understanding of the object of our

search, we have next to look into the Bible for the Christian element. Where in the Bible shall we find Christ for comparison, or that body of Christian truth which is to be our test? and how shall we know it? That which we are to use for comparison in forming our theology is not Christ represented by a saying or two, even though they may be great sayings. It is not Christ represented by the sum-total of the words that are attributed to him by the evangelists. It is not Christ represented by the conceptions of Paul or John. Yet it takes all these in. It is Christ as the giver of his high, large, vital conception of God and our human relations with him; or it is that large and vital conception given by Christ and sent forth into human experience. The Christian part or element in the Bible is that which joins its voice to the voice of Christ as he tells of God, without tone or undertone of contradiction to the essential truths of his great utterance.

How is it to be recognized? for only in so far as we can distinguish this element from everything else can we be sure of bringing into theology just what we ought. What is the true method of finding what Christ has given?

Only for a moment need we recall that easier

way which for us is no more. That which is from God is identified as his by inspiration, and the Scriptures are all inspired. So anything in the Bible may be received as from the God of Jesus Christ and accounted Christian. Inspiration is upon it as a sufficient identifying mark. It is through this channel that the Bible has been wont to pour its entire contents into theology. But this was never a worthy method, for the facts that make against it have always been known. Only by overlooking what he knew could a theologian ever treat the whole Bible as fit material for Christian theology, for the Bible has always been known to contain diverse elements, including some that Christianity could not be expected to assimilate. Of course we cannot follow this method now. We must discover the distinctions that exist in the Bible, and gather out what we ought to use.

The way to identify the Christian element is taught us by its nature. Not because it stands in some special place or bears some certifying mark may we call anything Christian, but only because it is what it is, and deserves the name. Evidence is to be in the thing itself, not in its locality or its label. Inspiration was an outward mark, but the inward certifier is quality; and quality can certify

itself only by appeal to judgment, or discernment. Quality must be recognized: there is no other way.

I once asked a class of students how they knew a Christian thought when they saw it. They instantly took a keen interest in the question, which they had never asked themselves in just that form before, and began to feel about for a test by which a thought might be identified as truly Christian. Not one of them replied, "By finding it in the Bible," or, "By having it certified by inspiration." Not one proposed any external sign or test whatever. Every man proceeded to suggest some Christian quality in the thought, or some comparison with Christian truth already known. In other words, they all said that we must hope to know a Christian thought by recognition. Every answer affirmed that we must judge, or discern, the Christian quality. My students were not posing as rationalists, either. They were simply common-sense Christians, mainly conservative in type, looking the facts in the face. They rightly felt that the name Christian must be given only to that which bears internal evidence of deserving it; and they saw that our only way to know whether such evidence exists is to judge, or to employ that

Christian discernment which is the power of vision in the spiritual world. The short method is the true method. The way to know a Christian thought is the same as the way to perceive the blue in the sky, — look at it and discern the quality. We may misjudge, but that is the fault of our poor senses, not of the method of spiritual sense-perception. There is no way but to judge, and recognize.

In this method there is nothing new and untried. It is the most commonplace of things. All Christians would agree that nothing ought to go into theology but that which is Christian, and the most of us are ready to tell what ought to go in and what ought not. We are always judging one another's theologies as Christian or not, on the whole or in special points. We judge whole types of theology in this way, and we judge men and their influence, — theologians, teachers, preachers. My students started no new heresy, they struck into the orthodox practice. Nor, I must add, do we usually pass these judgments by comparison with some special test, found for example in a single text or saying of the Lord. Sometimes we do that, but oftener we carry in mind, just as I have proposed, the impression of a body of truth larger

than a few great sayings, and approve or condemn by comparison with that. The habit of using such a body of truth, not distinctly defined and yet definite enough to serve as a standard, is as old as theological judgment, and as modern as ourselves.

Nevertheless there is a deeper note that ought here to be struck. The popular practice in judgment is not sure to go deep enough. If we are to identify the Christian element, we need to have in exercise the full outfit of our spiritual powers. It is a spiritual action. We are constantly tempted to rely upon the wrong processes for discovery of what is Christian. Sometimes we turn back to history, and quote doctrinal accumulations as that Christian substance which we are seeking. Sometimes we look to scholarship and critical acumen, and imagine that keen eyes of the intellect will see the Lord. But beyond all help that such processes may afford, there is something that can be accomplished by no such means. There is a spiritual vision involved. No man even in his secret soul may boast of possessing it, and yet it needs to be the very ideal and object of us all. Deep calls unto deep: the Christian element appeals to the Christian element. It is the spirit that discerns the Spirit, the child that knows the Father. There

is an inner life in which power to know the Christian truth is developed. Love of holiness discerns the holy. There is a practical sympathy with the redeeming love of Christ, longing and rejoicing to save, out of which we may be able to look with open vision into the redeeming love of God. There is a spiritual habitude under whose influence we may grow able to detect the faintest gleam of the genuine divine light, and recognize Christ and his likeness everywhere. So too there is such a thing as a trained spiritual reasonableness, by use of which we may draw right conclusions from eternal verity, and perceive what other things must be true if God is such a God as Jesus shows. Such spiritual faculties, inspired by God and clarified by experience in Christ, we need for sure discernment of what is Christian, within the Bible as well as without.

Long practice in the life of reverence may easily suggest a hesitation when it is proposed that we pass judgment upon the Christian quality of what we find within the Bible. Outside, it is different. We have no hesitation about reading Calvin or Channing or Edwards with discrimination, and affirming while we read that this is Christian and that is not, but the region within

the Bible may seem too sacred for us to enter in such a manner. What are we, we may ask, that we should presume to pass judgment upon thoughts that are written in the holy book? Does the due reverence permit us to rule out of our theology as non-Christian something that the Bible offers? How could we look into the face of God, standing in so presumptuous a position?

Such hesitation may be a part of our religious inheritance, but none the less does it need to be unlearned. It is better to ask what are we that we should decline to judge. How indeed shall we raise our faces to God if we will not exercise the powers that he has given us? What is a proper function of a Christian man, if not to know a Christian truth when he sees it? Christ has brought us the true light, and it is the will of God that we should learn to judge all things by its help. We are only beginners yet in the divine judgment to which we are called, but as beginners we must undertake the work and do our best and truest; for only by such loyal endeavor of imperfect sons of God can that which theology needs ever be accomplished. And never have we been taught that the covers of the Bible were intended to shut out the searching light of Christ

and exempt its contents from the judgment of his truth. That light shines through the covers of the Bible, as it shines through everything else. What are we that we should refuse to say whether we see the Christian quality in what we read within them? Shall we not tell the truth before God? And after all, what is there so presumptuous in saying that the one hundred and third Psalm is Christian in its view of God, or that the nameless prophets of the Exile were very near the kingdom and even within it? and where is the presumption in judging that the spirit of the one hundred and ninth Psalm is not the mind of Christ? — for all these three are just such judgments, of recognition or non-recognition of the Christian element, as our principle requires us to pass. Hesitation seems superfluous when we see what the proposed work really is.

This leads me to say that it is far too late for us to shrink from passing judgment upon matters that lie within the Bible. We and our Christian predecessors have always been doing it, and we cannot stop. The history of this operation is very long and very suggestive. To human judgment we owe the Scriptures themselves, and to

human judgment with respect to their highest qualities; for by what process was the Canon formed, of Old Testament or of New, except by the judgment of the God-loving people as to the fitness of certain writings, because of their authorship and their character, to represent the religion that produced them? It is because the Christian people judged what was Christian, and selected what was most Christian, that we have a New Testament at all. We are indebted to human judgment also for all the strength that textual criticism has added to our confidence in our sacred documents. Reckon up if you can the human judgments that have entered into the production of Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament, or any other good text of the Scriptures; and they have not all consisted merely in weighing external evidence. All literary and historical criticism is work of human judgment, and so is all work in biblical theology. All exegesis is judgment, intellectual and spiritual: one part of its life is sound mental understanding, and the other part is spiritual insight. Think how much human judgment has been expended upon the Epistle to the Romans, and remember how little the interpreters have shrunk from

judging what was Christian, when the bearing of Paul's thought upon theology was involved in their inquiries. Even the doctrine of high inspiration was a product of human judgment, for it was built up by inferences and deductions, processes of the mind. All systems of theology are framed by human judgment, which in forming them has to pass upon the quality, the meaning and the theological implications of the Scriptures. And remember that in all the nobler parts of this work the judgment that has been exercised is the work of spiritual discernment, a work of the mind of Christ in men. This divine gift Christians have all the time been endeavoring to put to its use: even when they failed they have failed in this high enterprise, using as they were able one of the dearest gifts of God to his beloved. To see with the eyes of Christ, to call that good which God calls good, to rule out that which the Christian truth rules out, — this is the highest work and privilege of God's children. We need not draw back as if this work of insight were not for us: rather should we enter upon it with a humble joy.

If we define the Christian element as broadly — some would say as loosely — as I have pro-

posed, and asked the people to join us in our conclusions, we shall be sure to meet two kindred objections. Perhaps the influence of them may color the thought of our own minds, as well as of those whom we wish to help. I, at any rate, am perfectly familiar with them in the history of my own thinking. Listen to the two together.

The position is no position, someone says, but a moving point. There is no plain standard of Christianity in this vague body of truth, for the method is subjective, and each man is left to make a Christianity for himself. We must have an objective external standard of Christianity that will mean the same to all, or Christianity will escape us when we look for it. With your broad principle you take away our objective standard, and you take away our Christianity itself, through uncertainty as to what it is. As for theology, there will not be enough left to make theology of. There are many familiar voices, some of them revered, that I can hear enunciating these kindred objections.

As to the removal of the objective standard of Christianity, I deny that our principle leaves us without such a standard. I affirm that by it alone can we obtain a true one. When we say

that Christianity is a body of truth discerned by the powers that are given us for discernment of truth, have we not set forth a standard? I am assuming, indeed, that we believe in the reality of large spiritual truth discernible by human powers divinely influenced. If only we believe in this, surely we have in the significance of Jesus Christ a real standard of what Christianity is, not subjective, and perfectly intelligible. But I freely own that the principle ignores the need of a standard visible or audible, so unequivocal that it can be understood in only one way. There is no such standard of Christianity, and there can be none. The church and the Bible have been taken to be such standards. Among Protestants it has been very generally held that the right use of the Bible in theology was use of it as the clear and unequivocal external standard of the Christian faith. But the Bible does not conform better to the definition than does the church. The Reformers hoped that the Bible would prove to be that unifying standard which the church had failed to be; but it has turned out otherwise. The Bible has not shown that it can be understood only in one way by truth-loving souls. When held as standard it has yielded, or sup-

ported, the Calvinistic and Arminian theologies, which oppose each other throughout, and represent God in two characters; and it is claimed to-day with equal sincerity by a hundred sects as the special authority of each. It is not adapted to serve as a plain standard from which only a single meaning can be drawn. It contains too much; there is too much variety in its points of view, and too much humanity in its writers: there is too much besides Christ. Its highest part I am proposing as standard for Christianity; but a single unequivocal standard the Bible as a book can never be. And moreover, the more we know of what is Christian, the more clearly we see that no single outward standard, like a body of writings, can possibly represent it and do it justice. What is Christian has its power in spirit and life. It cannot be formulated. To insist upon a form of words for it, even of inspired words, is to exchange it for something else. Its spiritual glory is that it is not rigid and unequivocal, the same to all. It is the same to all, yet with endless variety, like life, or love, or God. It is liable to be misunderstood, but this liability is only the defect of its highest quality. So we need not regret the absence of a Christian stand-

ard of theology that can stand as test of uniformity, and hold all Christians to one form and mode. That would not be a Christian thing. The proper standard for judging what is Christian and what is not is the rich body of Christian truth, revealing God for what he is, and entering into life, calling with all the solemnity of divine judgment for the abandonment of all views that conflict with that glorious revelation.

This leads me to the other objection, that our principle takes away the definiteness of our Christianity, and leaves us uncertain as to what it is. We are so used to formula-practice in theology that this objection comes naturally enough. Nevertheless, it is unworthy of Christians, for it does deep injustice to our actual Christian experience and certainty. There are many who feel that unless we use the Bible in the old way as a decisive standard for our Christianity we shall have nothing left, and that if we rely upon judgment and discovery for identifying the Christian element in the Scriptures, we shall discover so little that it will scarcely be worth discovering. But that implies that Christianity is so small that searching will not find it, or so like everything else that it cannot be distinguished except by a label.

Against this view of the dimness and undistinguishability of divine revelation in Christ, every Christian ought to protest in the name of truth and life. I utterly deny that Christianity is so vague a thing that spiritual discernment cannot find it if we seek, or so poor a thing as not to be worth the search. Can it indeed be so undiscoverable if God is in it? Pardon me if I return a moment to the account of it that I have given, and call attention to the definiteness of that body of truth which Christ has uttered forth into life for mankind. Here we have no shadowy and elusive thing, but a contribution to our theology that stands perfectly solid and strong.

The heart of theology is the doctrine of God in his relations with men: of this the rest is the unfolding. This is the heart of theology because it is the substance of religion. Now what Jesus taught was not theology at all: it was religion. He lived in God, he lived out God's heart in his own life, he showed men how to live in God. This is true religion, and therefore this is true theology. In what he thus taught there is no dimness or uncertainty. God is such a God as Jesus lived with in holy fellowship, and such

a God as Jesus showed forth in life and love and death. God is the God with whom Jesus told men they might live in holy fellowship, sinful though they were, because he was a Saviour-God. He is worthy of all love and trust, for he is like Jesus in that love for goodness and for men which bore Jesus to the cross. He delights to pardon, and rejoices over one sinner that repenteth: he is a God of searching and exacting holiness also, demanding likeness to himself. To men who trust him he will be the God of the Sermon on the Mount, a Father, and he will be the Spirit of the Fourth Gospel, indwelling, revealing, sanctifying. He is a God who will make men members of his own divine family, and true members of the human family too, living with their brothers as they ought. This is the heart of Christianity; and this truth has been so tested in life that we may receive it as true indeed.

Now what I affirm is that in this body of living truth we have a clear Christianity, and we have a distinct and positive body of doctrine for theology. Here, first of all, we have that decisive element for theology, a strong conception of God in his eternal and necessary character. From knowing him as he appears in Christ, we are able

to understand and acknowledge the claims which he makes upon men. In the light of what Jesus has shown us, we can have no doubt as to the spirit that will animate him in his large relations with mankind, and we can obtain a trustworthy point of view for interpreting his gracious activities. Working in loyalty to the Christian spirit, we can be reasonably sure of a right judgment as to what else is true if Jesus' testimony to God is true, — and this is the open door to a large part of our theological thought. In this light there is no permanent difficulty in knowing what is Christian and what is not, or in judging what ought to enter into Christian theology. For a time we may be in doubt on some point, for there may be many influences that confuse or delay our judgment: time, experience, and holy training will be needed before we can master the great Christian lesson in its simplicity, so fond are we of complicated schemes. But the truth in Christ is not only clear but clarifying, and the promise of true vision will be fulfilled. So Christianity is not lost, but simplified and elevated. It stands clear, self-evidencing, divine, and imparts to theology its own clearness, simplicity, and strength.

And if the objection still recurs that by this

broad definition of what is Christian I am opening an outlook into endless differences, since each man will be his own master as to what he will receive as Christian, and they will not agree, and there will be more theologies than ever, I reply, Not so. There is a clear outlook in the other direction. Theology will be more unanimous when it is required only to be Christian, than it used to be when it was required to take the whole Bible in. It is a simpler matter to be in harmony with Christ alone than to agree with Christ and all the writers of Old Testament and New in all their religious utterances. If theology has only to include the gospel, there is good hope that Christian students may yet come to a real harmony. But thus far theology has been expected to assimilate both the gospel and the law, and do justice not only to the reality of salvation by free grace, but to the tradition of salvation through earned righteousness as well. It has had to show God forth in the fatherly character in which Christ revealed him, and at the same time to preserve the kingly and judicial conceptions of his relations with men that are pictured in the Old Testament. It has had to conceive of God as a spirit, and yet keep in vogue large results from the less spiritual and

anthropomorphic ideas of earlier time. It has had to proclaim him as purely good, and yet make room for his doing many things attributed to him within the Bible that were not good. It has had to present the Christian ideal for human life, and yet do reverence to inferior ideals that were embodied in ancient theocratic and legal institutions. It has had to receive testimony not only from Christ and those who had learned of him, but also from men who had never heard of him and from institutions that he superseded. What wonder that there have been many judgments, and theology has been mixed, inharmonious, contradictory, uncertain? The one hope of a growing harmony in Christian theology dwells exactly in that simplifying and clarifying of the standard which is here proposed, by taking the Christian element alone, as all in all. To think with Christ, with men before Christ, and with disciples of Christ who understood him variously, is impossible; but to think with Christ himself, in loyalty to the God whom he reveals, may lie within the field of hope. Even thus unity will not come at once, for we cannot learn in a day to think in harmony with Christ, nor in another day to follow on to all that such harmony implies; but this is the way

that leads to the elimination of differences and the establishment for theology of an undying oneness.

Now for a moment I must sing the praises of the principle that I have been trying to set forth. I affirm without fear that the Christian element in the Scriptures, which is the large view of God in his relations with men which we owe to Christ, enters by right into our theology, brings with it what belongs with it by true affinity, and casts out all that cannot live with it in peace. I praise this principle as plain and unambiguous. It makes the decisive question for theology to be no longer, "What is in the Bible?" but, "What is of Christ and like Christ?" — and for the answering of this question it defines Christ from his large spiritual work and gift. This gives a clear meaning, that grows ever clearer as we know Christ more profoundly. Also, this principle is Christian. Surely there is no need of proving that, for it enthrones the Christian element alone, and admits no other in its presence.

Moreover, this principle does justice to all the elements in the case, as no other method of using the Scriptures in theology has ever done.

First of all, it does justice to the Scriptures. It disclaims preconceived theories of them, and

examines them. It neither exalts nor degrades them out of their actual position, but takes them for exactly what they are, and uses them in their real character. It takes them not as they look on superficial reading, but as they mean on full examination. To discover what they are and what they teach, it welcomes all worthy forms of study, historical, critical, devotional. It uses them not by text-picking and word-matching, as we must own that they have sometimes been used, but by discernment of their internal characteristics and their onward sweep. That the Scriptures exalt Christ above themselves, probably all Christians would admit in theory, but many find it hard to admit in practice. This principle alone assumes that fact and carries it to consistent application in theology. It distinctly subordinates the Bible to the Lord, the book to his teaching. When Christ has entered with his revelation of God, it welcomes him with the honor that is his due. It places him above those who heralded him beforehand, and above those who adored him afterward, for in him and not in them it finds the centre and test of Christianity. So it does justice to the Scriptures by accepting as their testimony in theology only the testimony of him

to whom they bear witness. To make the Scriptures that witness of Christ independent witnesses for doctrine that differs from Christ, it refuses, in the name of Christ and of the Scriptures too. It does them the justice of not holding them any longer responsible for their superseded parts, and giving them the privilege of testifying to Christ. No other honor could the witnessing Scriptures ask than this, that they be permitted to point to him who was born that he might bear witness to the truth, and say, "Hear ye him."

Again, our principle does justice to theology, for it makes theology Christian. It insists that theology that bears the Christian name shall bear the Christian character. So on the one hand it provides that the full wealth of the Christian revelation shall be poured into theology: that the all-glorious truth that Jesus imparted shall enter in its fulness and bring forth fruit after its kind, yielding all such inferences and developments as are congruous with its spiritual quality. It admits to theology all that Christ revealed concerning God, and all that is true if that is true. And on the other hand it provides for excluding from theology all incongruous elements, putting the ban upon all that can contradict Jesus or detract from

his testimony. It safeguards the religious character of theology, for it acknowledges Jesus as teacher in religion and bringer of the supreme religious gift, and it assures his religious gift the precedence in theology over the contributions of metaphysics and philosophy, however helpful they may be. So it exalts theology to its rightful place of honor, as the servant of the revealing Christ and the living Saviour God whom he reveals.

Our principle does justice also to the theologian. It pays him the compliment that is due to a man devoted to the highest work, for it is a reasonable principle, calling for honorable and straightforward processes of the mind, which alone are worthy of the highest realm. It does him the honor also of demanding much of him; for it is a spiritual principle, and therefore most exacting, which is only fair to a man whose powers are turned to the knowledge of God. No other principle for using the Scriptures demands so much of the user as this. It requires all knowledge of the Bible. It calls for deep and true spiritual perception, unerring sympathy with the mind of Christ, and ability to distinguish a Christian thought from the multitude of other thoughts that may throng it about. It requires him to be a man who recog-

nizes the face of God wherever a glimpse of it shines through; a man who can judge divine things in Christ's own spirit, so as to know what are true developments from his revelation and what inferences from his central truth are spiritually valid; a man, too, so loyal to the heavenly vision that he will speak the word that he perceives to be divine, even though it be called human by men who love the Lord as well as he. All this a laborer in divine theology ought to be, and upon these worthy qualities in him our principle insists.

And then it gives him his liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It sets above him only that glorious body of living truth which Jesus has given us, and invites him to contribute, if he is able, to the positive contents of theology. According to our principle, thought may be welcomed into theology that did not originate directly in the Scriptures. Whatever is in unison with the mind of Christ may enter, from whatever source. The Scriptures do not veto the thinking of the present-day theologian: they invite him to think, inspire his thinking, and welcome his thought if it be Christian. Possibly he may make some new application of Christian truth, or draw some infer-

ence, spiritually valid but not before accepted, from the Christian thought of God. He may be able to rule out, with divine authority, something that has remained to vex theology by its incongruous character. Any true man, thinking God's thoughts after him, may any day bring to theology a contribution that will belong to its very substance. This is nothing new, for theologians have always wrought in hope of being able to do this very thing; but they have done it under some constraint from theories that they held. But the practice accords with a truer theory. In loyalty to the Christian view of God, wherein there is no bondage, there is opened to the student all honorable spiritual freedom, in which his highest powers have utmost scope and range, for the finding out of all high matters that can be known to men.

Thus, doing justice to the Scriptures, to theology and to the theologian, our principle stands vindicated as worthy to govern the use of the Scriptures in theology.

When our principle has won its rights, something will come of it. There will be negative results in the field of theology by way of elimination, and positive results by way of construction. These we shall consider in the hours that follow.

III

RESULTS NEGATIVE

If we apply our principle, and use in theology only the Christian element from the Scriptures, the results will not all be directly constructive: they will be in part destructive, if we wish to call them so, though that is not the best name, as we shall see. Some familiar matters will be missed from theology when Christ has the field to himself. I cannot enumerate all the matters that will thus be eliminated, but I must devote this hour to suggestions as to the way in which these results, beneficent and not harmful, will be brought to pass.

First may be mentioned two or three topics that stand by themselves, with their relation to theology determined in another manner. There are some cases in which the contribution of the Scriptures to theology is immediately withdrawn, as soon as we have discovered what the Scriptures in question really are, — withdrawn because it has become apparent that the writings that lie before us are not witnesses on the question. We used to sup-

pose that the first chapters of Genesis were witnesses concerning the manner in which the world and man were created, and, through connection with the time-record of the book, concerning the age of the world and mankind. But we have learned to understand these writings better, and now we know that they are not historical records, and bear no testimony as to the age of the world and man, or the manner of creation. If this testimony be omitted, the Scriptures contain no testimony on these subjects, and hand nothing over to theology concerning them. Theology needs a right conception of the human race, but does not obtain from the Bible an account of its origin, or the origin of the world. The facts must be learned from other sources. This is a case in which the Scriptures, rightly read, withdraw their contribution.

More reluctantly but under equal necessity, theology begins to see that Genesis withdraws its contribution concerning the origin of human sin. The impossibility of maintaining the historical character of the narrative is enough, for we are under the vow of honesty to use the Scriptures for what they are. We have no historical narrative of the beginning of sin, and theology receives from the

Scriptures no record of that beginning. It is not enough that we admit this as a fact, we must use it as a fact; and that means that theology must account for sin, if at all, without the aid of such a narrative. Here is another case of testimony withdrawn.

If theology is left in this position, it will be just where the Master left it. He bore no testimony as to the manner of creation or the age of the world and man, and we cannot imagine that these questions could have any bearing, near or remote, upon the substance of his supreme revelation. Nor did he ever refer, so far as we know, to the origin of human sin; and though distinct belief on that subject has long been accounted part of loyalty to him, he never called it so. He found God, humanity, and sin all in existence, and proceeded to utter supreme truth about them. Theology may well be content to stand with the Master, receiving and passing on his testimony concerning things as they are, and convinced that no knowledge or theory of origins, however valuable it might be, is essential to the significance of his message.

These negative results reached by the withdrawal of testimony stand by themselves. We come now to the comparing of the Christian and non-Christian elements in the Scriptures.

Here questions throng. Is the Christian element all in the New Testament? or have we some Christian thought from pre-Christian times? What is there in the Old Testament that is spiritually one with the message of Christ, and what do we find there that once seemed true but cannot be true if Christ is the truth? We are required to draw this line through the ancient writings, and use for theology only what lies on one side of it, and remand to history what lies on the other. Similar questions arise concerning the New Testament. The New Testament is the great Christian book, and gives to theology abundance of Christian material in addition to the words of Jesus, most useful in filling out our understanding of his gift. Is it all of this kind? Does it contain any thought that originated in non-Christian sources or survived not wholly Christianized from pre-Christian times? Have we here any non-Christian Jewish remainders? Is there anything here that represents God in his relations with men in ways inconsistent with the testimony of Christ? If any such matter is here, it must be distinguished from the Christian element and used only for historical purposes, while theology receives the Christian part.

All students are familiar with the difference

between theology and the history of theology. Theology includes what is held to be true, and the history of theology includes what has been held to be true, on the subjects involved, — a difference deep and wide. In the history of theology is included, for example, the ancient doctrine that in the atonement of Christ an offering was made to the devil for the deliverance of men from his dominion. That doctrine is deeply interesting in the history of theology, but no one dreams that it now has the slightest claim to a place in theology itself. Other doctrines have had their day and ceased to be. The doctrine of the atonement itself has passed through various forms that cannot all be right since they are inconsistent one with another, and some of which cannot be right if Jesus was right in his view of God. So with other topics. Some of these forms of doctrine are dead, others still live: some are in the history of theology, and some in present theology itself. We know how to distinguish the two groups. Now our principle requires that what we do outside the Bible we do within the Bible also. In biblical thought that is pre-Christian or non-Christian we have profound historical and religious interest, for it is part of

the religious history that is associated with Jesus Christ; but while we study it in the history of theology we do not receive it into theology now if it represents God as Christ does not. From this process two results will follow. Theology will pass some biblical material by, and theology will cancel some paragraphs that have long stood upon its pages. Both from accepted theology and from the Bible itself the gospel of Christ sends some matters into retirement.

This is no radical or new proposal. We are all perfectly familiar with the operation of it, and are thankful for the results.

There is a great word in the New Testament that lies at the very heart of the Christian message: — "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." The thought was not unknown before Christ, or beyond the Hebrew world, but it is rightly esteemed a characteristic thought of Christianity, and a final word concerning God and his relations with men. There it stands forever, a revelation of that which is. But we must not fail to notice how much this great word consigns to the fate of things abandoned. First it antiquates at once all those naïve anthropomorphisms which represented the

simple unchastened conceptions of God that satisfied earlier man. Early religion was full of physical picturings of God, presenting him in terms of appeal to the human senses. These were present in the Old Testament, never forming the whole conception of God, but keeping the conception low, even while on the lower plane they were helpful to it. The great Christian word silently abolishes the anthropomorphic limitations, sets God forth solely as a Spirit, and opens the way to the highest spiritual relation between him and men.

But this great word relegates from theology to history much more than the ancient pictorialisms, the eye, the arm, the face, the throne, of God. As the context in the Fourth Gospel suggests, it retires the whole idea of the special localizing of worship. Since God is a Spirit, to be worshipped in spirit and truth, it follows that "neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem" shall men worship the Father, in that hour which "is now come." Now on the pages of the Bible the localizing of worship is as old as the story of Cain and Abel. It runs through the life of the patriarchs. It is the burden of the history of worship in tabernacle and temple. It is the secret of the significance of

Jerusalem. It makes the very substance of the appeal of Deuteronomy. It inspires the fine feeling of some of the sweetest Psalms. That God has dwelling-places, and then a dwelling-place, is a central conviction of the people's religion in the Old Testament. Only a few of the prophets clearly rise above it. Thus localized worship is taught within the Bible, and urged, and strenuously required in the name of God. One who reads the Bible through finds far more demands for it than rejections of it. Nevertheless it has no place in theology now, for the simple reason that Christ taught us better when he showed that God is a Spirit, to be found and worshipped wherever a soul looks to him in spirit and truth. The God whom we know in Christ is not a God of sacred places. Rather, every place is sacred

This well-known retiring of a biblical idea ought to teach us its wholesome and cheering lesson. We see Jesus Christ in the very act of driving inferior conceptions out of theology into the history of theology, and we thank God for the wholesome change that he has wrought. Then let us admit that the process is a sound one, and take to heart the fact that every true thought concerning God sends some false one into the background.

Let us not fear to inquire where the line runs through the Bible, to separate the antiquated from the ever-living. The writer to the Hebrews, speaking of matter that lies within his Bible and ours, says, "Now that which is becoming old and waxing aged is nigh unto vanishing away." Let it vanish, and let us not fail to discover when it has vanished, that we may rejoice the more in the everlastingness of that which cannot be removed.

There is another instance of elimination of biblical material, equally illuminating with this. In the New Testament much prominence is given to questions about Jews and Gentiles, the privileges of the one and the unprivileged condition of the other, and the relations of the two to salvation by Christ. The issue was raised, we know, in view of relations that are recorded in the Old Testament. It was a biblical question, and in Paul's day it was a practical question, with the echoes of which the New Testament rings. Yet here is a vital question in the history of theology and in the Bible, which is no question at all, or even a topic, in theology now. Paul uttered the great Christian word about it when he said, "Is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also, if

so be that God is one." One God, one relation of men to God, — that was Paul's Christian decision. It was a straight inference from Christ's view of God, and when once it was accepted the controversy was dead. Dead it is. No theology now needs a section on circumcision and uncircumcision, or the free access of Gentiles to God in Christ. Though the topic is embedded in the New Testament, written there as a vital part of the Christian gospel, it is now an element in history alone, never more in theology at all. Paul drove it out by the very process that I am advocating now, — by showing what the Christian verity concerning God implied upon the subject.

We may follow Paul's example in dealing with a kindred question not unknown in theology, — the way of salvation in the Old Testament times. If we hold to the idea of God that Christ has given us, we cannot possibly admit to our theology any idea that he, who is ever the same, proposed to accept and save men in one period on the principle of law and works and in another on the principle of grace and faith. Nor can we admit any doctrine that comes by way of inference from such a thought, implying it as true. That the God of grace was ever in his saving of men

the God of legalism is absolutely inconsistent with the Christian revelation. The one God who is the same to all men is the same in all periods. Though men may have misjudged him and seemed to see him in two characters, he changes never, and his principle in accepting men to salvation is as unalterable as himself. To say this is only to say that Christ has shown the living God as he really is. I do not say that the Old Testament really represents him as in its time a God of legalism. Rightly read, as we may now read it, I judge that it does not. But it has often been written into theology that it does represent him so, and it has been added that the Christian apostle Paul represents him as having two methods of salvation, the earlier legal and the later gracious. Whether Paul does so represent him is a question for evidence. But whoever may have conceived the Christian God as a God whose acceptance was formerly earned by meritorious works, it cannot be true, and the thought is one that the Christian message now forbids us to entertain. Earlier men may have thought otherwise, but we know in Christ that the only God always accepts men to salvation by the free grace of his own heart, and not on grounds of merit. Therefore all discussions that

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assume a legal method of salvation once in use by him must drop out of theology, and all inferences from such a view of God must go with them. Whatever such omission would cancel from theology it is our high privilege to eliminate. Under this influence, driven out because it is not one with Christ's gospel of free grace, the doctrine that God saves men by imputing to them merit which he has provided for them in Christ will retire into history, leaving theology to be dominated by the Christian element in the Scriptures. This doctrine of imputation is venerable in Christian history, but it has its roots in a conception of God which Christianity condemns and supersedes, and therefore it has no place in Christian theology. The gospel of Christ is far better than the legalism which theology even yet has scarcely learned to leave behind.

In the same direction the revelation of Christ leads us farther. Both the legalistic view and the localizing of worship have given sanction to the idea that God holds himself aloof from sinful men, and keeps them at a distance. For this idea, long influential in theology, the Bible has constantly been held to be authority. So it is, if we take it all as we find it and are bound by

it as it reads. If Solomon's temple pictures divine realities and relations as they are, then God dwells apart from men though manifested among them, shut in, as it were, in a secret chamber, and sinners are held away from approach to him by a succession of sanctities, while they are represented before him by a series of indispensable propitiations. The tabernacle, the temple, the Jewish legal system, all proclaim the withdrawal of God, the separateness of the Holy, the inaccessibleness of the divine to the sinful. The developed system of sacrifice in later Judaism gave strong emphasis to the same idea. Now, it is not surprising that men thought thus of God. The idea is very ancient and widespread. It was built into many of those Gentile temples after which we now know that the temple of Solomon was patterned. The idea was reinforced by moral considerations, for when once God was known as pure and demanding purity, all the stronger would be the conviction that he must withdraw himself from the sinful. When his will was expressed in a law of commandments, then such a law must form a hedge about his presence. Surely, it was thought, in his holiness he could be approached by sinners only with pro-

pitiations, whereby his wrath might be averted and his favor won. This is a perfectly natural view for sinful men to take of their relation to God, for the one thing certain about sinful men is that they will misunderstand and misjudge God. But we know at present that it is absolutely a non-Christian idea. It lacks the very element that Jesus brought in. He had no place for the idea that God holds himself aloof from the sinful: he taught that God's feeling toward the sinful was the same as his own, expressed in coming forth to seek and to save that which was lost. He never taught or gave a hint that God's favor needs to be won, or his wrath averted, by sacrifice or propitiation: on the contrary, he made men know that God is always waiting the opportunity for free exercise of his grace. According to him the only barrier between God and men is the sinfulness of men which keeps them away from him. The holiness of God is manifested in the fact that sinfulness is a barrier, and in the eager desire of God for the removing of the barrier and the bringing of men to his holy fellowship. This is the Christian light upon God, given nowhere else. No other religion has it. In the Old Testament there are gleams of it, still

dimmed by the clouds of altar-sacrifice, but in its fulness it shines only in Jesus Christ. This central truth, that God is truly revealed in the seeking and saving love of Christ, not only enters into Christian theology, but constitutes its very heart. Kindred conclusions from it must have place in theology, but all that represents God in a manner inconsistent with it must be banished without regret. The ancient word propitiation must not come into theology in senses that correspond to the old non-Christian thought of God. If it comes at all, it must enter as it enters the New Testament, where all the propitiation that is mentioned is said to be provided by God himself. God, the free and ready source of grace that saves, — this is Christianity, and to this our Christian theology must be made to correspond.

We may look at another illustration. The field of eschatology, so far as this world is concerned, will be entirely cleared by the application of our principle. Here the decisive influence has always been a non-Christian element.

When the Messiah should come, what was he expected to do? Hopes in Israel varied, but not widely. He was to establish a kingdom in

Israel, and reign over the chosen people, and make Israel rule over the nations. The ancient kingdom of David, sacred and glorious in national memory, was the type which he would fulfil and glorify. Israelites of past ages would be raised from the dead to share in the glory of his kingdom. The living Israel would be purified from sin that it might reign with him, and would enter the kingdom through the ordeal of a judgment. Thus the chosen people would be glorified with the Messiah in his kingdom at Jerusalem, while the nations would either be blessed in his reign or be punished for their hatred of Israel. This, with variations, was the hope.

Jesus appeared, and was rejected by the nation in general, but by a minority was welcomed as the Messiah. When he had gone, the Messiah, as these believed, had been among them. And what had he done? He founded no kingdom in his lifetime, nor took any step in that direction, beyond the claim that was implied in his final entrance to Jerusalem. At the hands of Israel the Messiah died. But death was followed by resurrection, and soon he was gone from the earth and was exerting spiritual power upon men from the heavenly world. A church sprang

up in his name, which started within the Jewish circle but soon went abroad among the nations, where alone, and not among the people of the Messiah, it was permanently established. He was as far as possible from fulfilling the sacred expectations about the Christ, and yet, in the sure conviction of his early followers, he was the Christ. Surely, then, the expectations would yet be realized: fulfilment was only delayed. He had gone from the world in which he was to reign, but the heavens could not retain him: he would quickly return, the dead would be raised, the judgment would be held, the kingdom would be established, and the Messiah would reign in majesty on the earth. This Christian rendering of the Jewish expectation took powerful hold upon the Jewish Christians, and was passed on by them to the Gentiles who believed, and formed a mighty inspiration in the life of the early church.

But the expectation was not realized. The Messiah did not return in glory. A wholly different course of events unfolded. A spiritual work was done, and it was a work that formed a true continuation of what Jesus had done in life and death, a genuine development from his actual

mission. There came new holiness and fellowship with God, new love and fellowship with men, new hope of immortality. There came a living and growing church on earth. This was what Jesus had introduced. The Christ who lived brought in a future like himself. Though the advent-hope continued, there came no realization whatever of that hope or any of its elements. The movement of history followed according to the influence of the Christ who came, not according to the hopes of those who pictured him beforehand.

How could it be otherwise? From what should a movement of history come forth? from what was expected to occur, or from what had occurred? Expectations do not determine what history shall be: facts and working influences do that. The Jesus who lived and died was the one from whom the Christian development took its character, not the Davidic king long hoped for but never born. The history that followed Christ has been Christian, imperfectly of course but really: it would have been Jewish, not Christian, if the ancient hope had been realized. In other words, the fulfilment of the pre-Christian advent-hope ought not to have come, and could not come. Now that we are far enough away to look at it, we can see

that the advent-hope was part and parcel of Judaism, and no part of the gift of Christ at all. It came most naturally into the early Christian life, seeing that the first disciples did not understand the Master very well, and it was natural that for a time it should remain a living hope. But it was never anything else than a Jewish remainder, a survival, an intrusion of something incongruous into the Christian field.

The advent-hope had its usefulness for the early Christians, for after Jesus the real Christ had lived and been loved, and died and been glorified, the hope of seeing him again had a quality that no Jewish expectation could ever possess. Christian faith, hope, and love all entered glowingly into the looking for his return. So the hope kept the image of the unseen Saviour vividly present to the church, and brightened dark days with a heavenly light. Nevertheless Christ himself had doomed it to disappointment by being what he was. The real Messiah had started history in another direction, and the visible return to Messianic glory on earth was no item in the development that came forth from him.

Consequently the advent-hope ought to have been dropped out of Christianity, when time had

refuted it and experience had shown the kingdom coming in another way. It was discredited long before the New Testament was complete, for it was never anything but hope of an event close at hand. The Scriptures know absolutely nothing of a return of Christ after two thousand years. But it has had a different fate, full of pathetic interest. It was taken to be a part of Christianity itself. Was it not a part of early Christian life? Did not the apostles cherish it? — and they could not be mistaken. Does it not glow on the pages of the Bible? Still therefore the expected event was thought to be only delayed, and so the millennial conception of the kingdom, and the vivid advent-hope, have survived until this day, side by side with that spiritual experience which has borne agelong testimony that the real Christ is working on another plan.

This discredited hope of a soon-returning Christ and a visible kingdom has long been kept alive in perpetual disappointment by the accepted doctrine of the Scriptures. But the sound historical interpretation which is now possible assigns to it no place at all in the gift and revelation of Christ, and therefore our principle requires us to drop it and all that belongs to it out of our Christian

theology. Visible advent, simultaneous resurrection, assemblage of all men for judgment, millennial reign of Christ on earth, — all is Jewish survival, historically discredited by the work of Christ himself: it is a remainder from pre-Christian life and hope, demonstrated to be non-Christian by the different course of Christian history; wherefore it forms no part of Christian theology. Under the wholesome influence of our principle this whole group of topics will disappear, and the Christianity that proceeded from the actual work of Christ will stand delivered from the contradictory conception that has been bound in with it through all these ages.

I am not overlooking the important question that has already been suggested to every listener. Everyone remembers that the advent-expectation can be quoted from the lips of Jesus Christ himself. There stands the great apocalyptic passage in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, with other sayings of similar effect, picturing the coming kingdom in the common manner of Jewish hope, and announcing the visible advent of the Messiah as close at hand. How can one say the advent-hope is not Christian when it has this endorsement? Is there then a non-Christian

element in the words of Christ himself? Had he too his ideas inherited from an expiring age, existing side by side with his vision of eternal truth? Did he conceive the coming kingdom in the mistaken manner of the time? or are the words of expectation that never came true attributed to him by others, and not his own?

As to the interpretation of these sayings, we must judge between two ways. One is that while his conception of the spiritual character of the coming kingdom rose immeasurably above the thought of the time, and was a Saviour's own conception, he still conceived the time and form of the kingdom in the manner which the past had consecrated. The other is that the collectors of the synoptic record, preserving the tradition of the church, gathered in with his words some that were not his, and so attributed to him the accepted view of the kingdom, which they had no doubt that he entertained. Probably there is no third interpretation. The time has not yet come for general agreement here, but the question has arisen in the course of candid study, and is destined to remain long in discussion. Therefore let the discussion be open and without reproach. Many persons feel it necessary to hold that Jesus

spoke the words, in order to preserve the credit of the evangelists and the accuracy of the record, lest we should lose our sense of certainty as to what he said and did. This is the popular feeling. Others feel it necessary to hold that he did not speak the words, in order to preserve the spiritual sanity and consistency of our Lord himself, and avoid the conclusion that he misconceived the nature of his own work and kingdom, — an object quite as important, one would think, as the maintaining of the credit of the evangelists. Others again, disclaiming any object except to read his life as they find it, think the evidence shows that he spoke the words, or at least some of them, and further, that he conceived the kingdom in the manner of the Old Testament, though with vast heightening of its spiritual character. Some of these, with deepest reverence toward him, regard the retention of the old idea as an unimportant element in the life of him who was bearing to the world the everlasting message. These are not surprised if the messenger of God in the limitations of humanity thought in the manner of his time. They ask how he could have addressed his own generation if he had not. What he lived for, they would say, was not to show at once, or even to see at

once, all truth that was involved in his mission, but to reveal that central truth and eternal life in which the true kingdom in its own time would consist. They see so clearly the revealing and redeeming glory of Jesus Christ as not to be troubled by this limitation upon his foresight. So these interpreters, though they find the advent-hope expressed in genuine words of Jesus, would agree with me in judging it to be no part of his gift to the world.

It is possible that with these last the future Christian faith will more and more agree. The synoptical Gospels, it is true, are not that precise transcript of Jesus' life that they were once thought to be: they embody the church's chief remembrances of him, preserved in various ways, and nowhere attested as faultless remembrances. But exegesis is growing united in affirming that the expectation of an early return in his kingdom cannot fairly be eliminated from the words of Jesus; and yet the fact stands plain as the sun in the heavens that his life and death led out by their character into a different development, in which an early return had no place or possibility. With these facts theology has to deal, and one should judge only with reverent diffidence and patience.

When theology has well distinguished the permanent gift of Christ from everything else, two results will follow: the Christian gift will shine more brightly than ever in a glory of its own, and the other elements in Scripture will be more justly estimated. To understand Christ more truly will not be altogether to despise these more. Our present judgments of the non-Christian elements are very rough and poor, for want of clear vision of what is truly Christian. What we call Jewish hopes are not for us to cherish, but they were not all gross and unworthy in their time. Much that was never Christian had a genuine value in its own day, and was not unworthy of the noblest minds. It may be that Christians of a later and riper time will not wonder or be grieved that the Christ whom they adore and love saw partly with the eyes of his age, when they perceive how much it means that he revealed the highest things in the very light of heaven, and made to dawn upon this world the glory of the living God.

The story of the advent-hope teaches us one large lesson. That hope is found in the New Testament: then the pre-Christian matter within the Bible is not all found in the pre-Christian writings. It has been commonly assumed that

everything in the New Testament belongs most completely to the Christian period, and is entirely expressive of the mind of Christ. It is on this hypothesis that theology has usually been constructed. But here is a revolutionary light. In the advent-hope we find a group of pre-Christian conceptions so wrought in with the Christian realities as actually to be taken for a part of them, even until now. They were thoroughly characteristic of the life of early Christianity, holding possession not only of the common people but of the loftiest minds. They appear in Paul, most vividly in his earlier writings. In the Johannine writings they have almost disappeared, leaving traces only here and there; but elsewhere they are present with all the power of living convictions. It is easy to account for their presence: their presence itself is what theology needs to consider but has never yet admitted to its proper influence. A distinctly Jewish hope, opposite in effect to the character of Christ's actual working, and progressively discredited by every day of continued life, stands expressed as a living hope within that New Testament which is our primary Christian document.

This fact gives light, but the light reveals

conditions that ought to relieve our difficulty. The natural and inevitable had happened. New ideas never come into a vacant mind: there is always something there already. New ideas come into the midst of old ones, and the new and the old proceed to exist together. Old ideas have the advantage of possession, and do not immediately retire. They stay long after they have had time to go, long after they have encountered thoughts that ought to banish them, and long after their possessor may suppose that they have gone. Old and new exist in unstable equilibrium. Probably every one of us to-day is entertaining ideas that ought long ago to have been banished by other and better ideas existing in the same mind with them.

This, which is the only thing that can occur when new thoughts enter, is just what did occur in the case of the early Christians, including the men who wrote the New Testament. We can watch the very process. We see the Christian conceptions work with power, and just as clearly do we see the operation of ancient inherited ideas and habits of mind inbred by national training. Both the Christian element and the pre-Christian influences lie open to our eyes as we read these

precious Christian pages; and we cannot do justice either to the New Testament or to the gospel of Christ until we frankly acknowledge the presence of both and distinguish them from each other.

On this point theology has not become consistent. On the one hand it has generally been assumed that the writers of the New Testament were preserved from writing anything that was not perfectly accordant with the mind of Christ: hence it has been considered wrong to suggest that non-Christian matter could be found upon their pages. Yet on the other hand it has been recognized that each writer was himself, and showed not only in style but in thought the effects of personal experience and national training. These two conditions could be fulfilled only by perpetual miracle, and to the perpetual miracle of inspiration the supposed result has been attributed. But the reading of the New Testament with open eyes is enough to show that such a miracle has not been wrought. The process natural to the human mind has gone on. New ideas and old have existed in these men's minds, Christian and pre-Christian side by side, and both have influenced the written page. It is our bounden duty in gathering material for our theology to recognize

these facts, and to estimate that which lies before us in the light of its actual relation to the body of Christian truth.

The writer to the Hebrews, we know, was a man of Alexandrian training, who viewed the gospel with Alexandrian eyes and used the Bible in Alexandrian methods. He allegorized; and his practice, being found within the field of inspiration, has often been taken as an authorized example, justifying all Christians in allegorical interpretation. But we know better now. Allegorizing is distinctly a wrong method of using the Scriptures, and the example of the writer to the Hebrews does not make it right. The same man held the late Platonic idea of patterns in the invisible world, which visible things have been created to resemble; and he stated the doctrine of salvation by Christ partly in terms of that idea. Commentators and theologians have often supposed that therefore they must accept the idea as true, and believe with him that the real and effective sacrifice of Jesus was offered, not on the cross, but after his ascension, in the heavenly temple. This is a difficult doctrine to assimilate into the gospel of the New Testament, but the task has been attempted, in loyalty to the Scrip-

tures. But we have learned that no such duty is imposed on us. With his training and for his purpose it was natural for this nameless writer to present the matter thus, but the doctrine of heavenly patterns has long ago retired into the history of theology, and has now no place in theology itself. That this writer understood Christ better because he conceived him thus, or made a permanent contribution to theology thereby, probably no modern theologian believes. Here we find ourselves eliminating from theology a conception that is recorded with glowing confidence on the pages of the Bible. The act is right, and should be repeated wherever we have identified some element brought in from beyond the Christian source and not of the spiritual kindred of the mind of Christ.

The largest question concerning elimination of temporary matter concerns the contribution made to theology by the apostle Paul. Paul has commonly been regarded as the theologian of the New Testament, and theology has judged itself bound to adopt all of his thought as its own. He came into Christianity from a thorough training in pre-Christian, non-Christian, and partly anti-Christian views of God and religion. So far as

concerns the principle of salvation, he received the genuine Christian message into his deepest heart, and probably he entered into the real significance of the gospel more profoundly than any of the original disciples, certainly more profoundly than they did at so early a date. He served as the chief agent in leading Christianity out to that worldwide operation which was its proper destiny. His Pharisaic training has always been considered a providential asset of the new faith, since it stood as a most helpful background against which the doctrine of free grace might be clearly exhibited. Yet while this is true, it was perfectly inevitable that he should receive the gospel into a mind in which existed the habits of a lifetime and the ideas which had been formative of earlier belief. It is also true that much of his writing was colored by controversy with Judaism, and many of his terms were used in a sense and manner dictated by the usage in which his opponents understood them, — a usage determined, of course, by other influences than Christianity. That every thought written by Paul was solely the fruit of Christian operation in his mind, uninfluenced by anything else, is disprovable by study of his writings, just as it is impossible in human

nature. I should be glad if some competent Christian and scholar would give us a book on "The Old and the New in Paul." He grasped the true gospel, and uttered it forth with energy unsurpassed. But in so speaking as to be powerful in his own time he could not do otherwise than use forms of thought that were then alive but had no hold on permanence. He was compelled to robe the Christian truth partly in inherited garments, which might not become it best through all ages. He was compelled to this by the necessity of being understood and effective, and at the same time it was inwardly impossible that he should do otherwise. His pages bear the record of some distinctly Jewish conceptions, not transformed by Christianity. So there are in Paul both old and new. The new is entitled to outlive the old, but theology has done what it could to keep the old alive. Theology must now learn the difference between the two. The presence of the old is inevitable in nature: the presence of the new is the gift of God.

But the old in Paul, if it is found, and all that has come into his writings from anywhere else than from Christ, is to be judged. It may be of one substance with Christ's truth, and it may not.

Paul used some analogies from Roman law for illustration of Christian realities, and more from Jewish law and institutions. I have heard theologians maintain that we must hold those analogies from Roman law, and the Roman law itself, to be virtually inspired of God for expression of religious truth, because Paul used them. Concerning the analogies from Jewish law and institutions the same assumption is most familiar. But it will not stand. The points used for analogy were brought in from outside the Christian circle of ideas, and are not to be assumed to be points of Christian truth. Old-Testament matter found in the New Testament is to be judged as to its relation to the Christian element just as we judge it in the Old Testament. Quoting it has not changed it. Using it for illustration of the gospel does not make it a part of the gospel, or require all ages to think in terms of it. So our Lord taught us when he disparaged the Mosaic law of divorce as ranging on a lower plane than the true doctrine. If that law had been cited in the New Testament, or somehow used for illustration, it would not thereby be made Christian, but would still have to be estimated at its true inferior value. And we cannot

close the case by saying that nothing of such a nature could be quoted in the New Testament, for we must take things as they are, and the facts put an end to the expectation that no non-Christian matter will be found in the Christian writings.

Paul and his companion-writers, especially the writer to the Hebrews, sometimes express faith in Christ in terms of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. In the ancient Scriptures that system was very prominent: therefore it has been held to be truly expressive of the divine mind and entitled to contribute its idea to Christianity. Old-Testament religion, it is said, was sacrificial, expressible in terms of altar and priesthood, and therefore New-Testament religion must be of the same nature. The New Testament does not abound in sacrificial terms illustrative of the gospel, but they exist, and from the old method of using the Scriptures it has come to pass that the sacrificial idea has been read into much biblical language that did not properly contain it. So the idea entered theology, and popular religion, with great power. How full the hymns used to be of sacrificial language! and how steadily have theology and preaching held to the necessity of putting the

gospel of salvation in terms of altar and sacrifice! But more recently the sacrificial idea has been more closely examined. It has been noticed that sacrifice is no specialty of the Old-Testament religion, but a universal practice of antiquity; that in the practice of the Old Testament sacrifice stood as an institution within the covenant-relation between God and man, and never served as a means by which man was to enter that relation; that the growth of the elaborate sacrificial system in Israel was gradual, and came to its completion as an instrument for building up nationalism, rather than as a means of access to God; that its completion was reached through religious decline rather than through spiritual advancement; that the prophets and psalmists, the best religious teachers in Israel, disparaged sacrifice and pleaded for religion in the soul and the conduct; and that Jesus Christ himself was silent concerning sacrifice, and like the prophets urged that God called for religion of another kind. All this tends to settle the question whether Jewish altars truly represent the gospel at all, or even symbolize the reality that is brought to us by Jesus Christ. The Christian revelation decides the question in the negative. We may be sure that

God does not require us to cast our conceptions of divine realities in the mould of institutions that are not alive to our day and generation, — least of all in terms of an institution that Christ silently extinguished. Pre-Christian light is not as bright as Christian light, and cannot illumine the Christian reality. So when we find allusions to altar-sacrifice in the New Testament we read them as illustrations of sacred truth from sacred institutions, used when they were useful. While the institutions were still alive and suggestive of spiritual meanings they were helpful for illustration of "redeeming grace and dying love," but they formed no part of the permanent setting of the gospel of Christ, and theology does not draw nearer to accordance with the Christian element when it sets Christ forth in terms of altar-sacrifice. There is a genuine Christian idea of sacrifice, but it rises high above the world of altars. The cross is the very throne of sacrifice, but it is not an altar. The interpreting of the Christian idea of sacrifice in terms of Jewish altars has done more than can be told to conceal this higher Christian meaning. The God whom Christ reveals delights in such sacrifices as the spirit of the cross pours out, but has no pleasure in victims of the altar.

Jesus, revealing God, has remanded the entire system of altar-sacrifice to the history of religion, with all that it brings into religious teaching, and has established for permanence that other and higher doctrine of sacrifice which belongs to the religion of the Spirit. So although Jewish altars are remembered in the New Testament, we learn ourselves to remember them with all their world as something that Christ has relegated to the past, that we may fill our theology from the eternal sources.

These illustrations show what our principle is, — it is simply the law that we must set the gospel by itself and keep it there. We must not bind in with the gospel of God thoughts that originated and took on their quality where God was not known as he is known in Christ. To Christian theology is entrusted the work and privilege of setting the gospel by itself, and it must use the Scriptures with this end in view. The negative or excluding part of this work has been before us in the present hour. The work of separation has never been thoroughly done, and the result is that the genuine Christian reverence still holds firmly on to much that is not Christian. The great distinction cannot be made in a day, and if someone were

now to draw it with perfect correctness according to the mind of Christ it would not be accepted at once by the Christian people. It is a work of time. But we can at least see of what nature the undertaking is, and devote ourselves to it with an honest heart. Before the great distinction can be made, it is evidently necessary that that rich body of truth of which I spoke in the second lecture should be more clearly perceived as something by itself. That body of truth concerning God and ourselves is the permanent element in the thought of the Scriptures, and all else is the passing. That body of truth is the eternal element in theology also, and all else we must regard as not only passing but past. The distinction between the transient and the abiding in the Bible has never yet been properly wrought out. The establishing and defining of that distinction will determine the use of the Scriptures in theology.

The searching study of the Bible that is now in progress will help us in this work. The Scriptures are now being differentiated, so to speak, into their various layers of spiritual value and power. The criticism that is so distrusted is preparing for the hands of theology the real book, with the eternal light on its highest parts. When the passing and

the permanent, the old and the new, the non-Christian and the Christian, have been well distinguished, theology will have the unmixed divine for its material. At that time the topics in the theological system will be less numerous, and we shall cover the field by smaller books than our fathers used to write, — not because we know less of God, but because we know more, and what we know is more concentrated in eternal reality. The topics will be less in number, but there will be no inferior matters for us to elevate by argument to the rank of the superior, and no pieces of treacherous trestle-work to connect the rock-laid stretches of our road. The subject-matter of theology will appeal to the highest spiritual sense of the soul in fellowship with God. Toward the coming of such a day we may work with confidence that our labor is not in vain in the Lord; and some glimpses of its advantage over the present we may see in our next hour together.

IV

RESULTS POSITIVE

If I say that the Christian element alone should enter from the Scriptures into theology, the statement may seem to have a negative sound, as if the main effect would consist in eliminations and omissions. Such effects will follow, as we have seen, much to the benefit of theology, but it would be a great mistake to imagine this the chief result. The Christian element from the Scriptures is to enter theology: it is to enter alone, in all its majesty, and fill the whole place. This is a great and mighty word. It is the word of light and hope for theology, for if the Christian element does come in alone we shall have a theology, never finished, indeed, but ever growing, that will be true forever. I am not to construct that theology to-day, fascinating though the attempt appears, but there are three elements in the making of it of which I must speak. I wish to trace the Christian element out of the Scriptures into theology, to show with what power and glory it enters, and to indicate the posi-

tion in which the Scriptures are found after their contribution has thus been made.

The Christian element comes in from the Bible as a whole. We have seen that the pre-Christian element is not all found in the older writings; and neither is the Christian element all found in the writings of Christian date. The Old Testament is often disparaged, and has even been called the millstone on the neck of Christianity. We might expect that from the strictly Christian point of view it would appear at much disadvantage, and that when its excessive influence had been removed Christianity would gladly think of it as a millstone thrown off. But it proves otherwise. When the excessive influence of the Old Testament has been thrown off from theology, the Old Testament begins to be appreciated. The conception of God and his relations to men which Jesus brought did not break with him into a world where it was entirely new. Supreme truths do not come in that way: they have to rise as by a dawning. In the Old Testament, though not there alone since the earth is the Lord's, the Christian truth was already present, though still mingled with much that must be left behind.

Jesus came in the line of the prophets, — not of

the priests or lawmakers, but of the prophets. His gospel was not a ritual of access to God, or a code of laws, but a revelation of truth in life, and therein it was a prophetic word. But if Jesus came in the line of the prophets, the prophets were in the line that led to Jesus. It was the line of men who in some good degree saw God as he is, and told men what they saw. When Jesus came he took up the prophetic message and carried it on to fulness. Accordingly we find the prophets bringing their contribution of truly Christian utterance to the service of theology. Not perfectly, yet in great measure, their "Thus saith the Lord" agreed with that of Jesus, and they preached the claims of such a God as he revealed. So they contribute to the stock of expression wherein we find knowledge of the Living One, and many of their words concerning him are among the noblest that we possess.

With the prophets bringing Christian truth come the psalmists, whose songs have always served for expression of the Christian heart. How poor we should be without the Psalms! and as they serve the high purpose of religion, so they contribute to theology, for they sing out the view of God that accords with the Christian vision. In this they

have done Christian service never to be superseded, for they have illustrated the feeling that corresponds to the true relation of men to God when it is livingly realized. Into theology they bring this invaluable contribution in the realm of feeling, and so they help us to remember that our sacred science is not of the intellect alone. By the best of the psalmists this helpful work is well-nigh perfectly done. The whole group brings pathetic contribution also to the history of religion and of theology, for some of the psalmists pass before us as devout souls feeling their way through the moral perplexities of life, and seeking a faith that could survive amid the darkness of the world. They illustrate too the superiority of Christ. In their time love to men, especially to enemies, had not become a part of religion, and so they often fall far below the Christian level. The one hundred and ninth Psalm makes us thankful for the dying prayer of Stephen.

I said that Jesus came not in the line of lawmakers or of priests. That the gospel is a new law was indeed a doctrine early accepted among Christians, but it never came from Christ. That the gospel is a new ritual of sacramental worship, with priesthood and altar at its very heart, innu-

merable Christians still believe, but it has no foundation in what the Master taught. That Christ effects a new propitiation of God is held by many as the very substance of the gospel; but when we see how Jesus thought of God and offered his grace to sinful men, his God appears to need no such propitiation as was offered in old time when God was known less truly. Yet this is not to say that priesthood and law have nothing Christian in them and offer nothing to theology. Priesthood brings less than law. The idea of priesthood is swallowed up in the larger idea of access to God, — the priesthood of all believers, — and of help from one to another in access to God. As for law, the idea of obligation which it enshrines is perfectly Christian, just as it is perfectly natural and eternal. Christ preserves and honors it, but does better for men than lawgiving, by lifegiving and writing the will of God upon the heart. And in the old historic law, a product of ages of religion, great truth concerning God and the relation of men to him shines forth. Right moral demands are there, which Jesus reasserted, re-enforced, and showed in deeper meaning. Not everything in the ancient law is Christian, but the claim of God is real, and the relation that renders law sacred exists forever.

Besides the distinctly Christian element, the Old Testament puts at the service of theology a mass of suggestive and illuminating history. It is history of growth toward true knowledge of God. In it we see the conception of God and the relation of men to him struggling up from low and partial forms, and cleansing itself toward discernment of the perfect love and holiness. They who like may call this progress in the thought of God a purely human development, but a clear-eyed theology will always see in it also the onward-moving God, leading men toward better knowledge of himself. The progressive knowledge came in accordance with the nature of advancing man, but it came none the less in accordance with the will of the revealing God. What life and power does this interpretation pour into the Old Testament! There is knowledge of the highest even yet to be gained from the manner in which the highest became known.

Indeed, the knowledge of this progressiveness is a contribution to theology. It means that in the earlier times God was not altogether rightly known, —from which it follows that actions were attributed to him that were not his. We used to assume that the God of Jesus Christ was actually represented

in all deeds and words attributed to God throughout the Bible. Then we had to reconcile all these words and deeds with the character of God as we know it in Christ. Often that could not be done. The endeavor disgusted many at the moral insincerity which they felt that it implied, and unsettled the idea of the divine character for a host of Christians. That was one of the practices that came near to making the Old Testament indeed a millstone on the neck of Christianity. But now we read in the Old Testament the history of religion. We find realistic pictures of ethical and religious life all along the way, and see how men thought of God from stage to stage of their advancing life. We are not required to think that he was rightly pictured on this page or that. We are required instead to exercise our moral judgment all the way, and call things honestly by their right names, and disapprove what the Christian spirit disapproves, and ascribe to God only what is worthy of the God whom we know in Christ. Thus the Scriptures, rightly read, deliver to theology one clear and single doctrine of God, the Christian doctrine. What we do find in those older books is the thought of God growing finer and truer up toward Christ, until at length a prophet, adding to the thought of

physical transcendence the vision of moral beauty, can say, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made."

The heart of the Christian contribution comes into theology, as I need not say again, as the direct personal gift of Jesus Christ. To this we will return after a moment, when we have seen in what living form the Christian element moves on into theology from the writings that form the latter part of the New Testament.

It is not enough to say of this latter part of the New Testament, the part after the Gospels, that it brings to theology the written statements of Paul and other apostolic men concerning God and Christ. We have here a vital part of the revelation itself. The latter part of the New Testament brings to theology the vision of the Christian revelation doing its work, and thereby illustrating its nature. Here we see in what power it went forth from Christ, what life it produced, what inner experience

it initiated, what transformations it wrought, what thoughts it suggested, what duties it brought home, what power it imparted, what faults it overcame, what aspirations it awakened, what character it breathed into men. We see what leaders it raised up, what teaching it inspired, what writings it brought forth for the common service. We behold the indwelling Spirit working mightily in pursuance of the gift of Christ. All this we see together with the limitations that were upon the gospel, and the human causes that restrained it from perfect work. We observe how it entered into union with ideas that it found in the world, and partly assimilated them to itself and partly became assimilated to them, in this doing the inevitable. In a word, we see how Christ had cast forth his gift into the world of men, to be cared for there by the providence of his Father and the energy of the abiding Spirit.

Here theology learns what it is that it receives from Christ. The latter half of the New Testament utterly refutes the idea that Christianity is a body of statements, a deposit, an unchangeable substance, a doctrine formulated once for all. Christianity appears on these pages as a living and constantly changing thing. Jesus lived and gave

forth his influence; and within the New Testament that tells of him we find the harvest from his influence springing up in half a dozen different forms. No one of them is identical, in expression or in thought, with his direct and personal gift. The Pauline Christianity, and the Johannine, and all the others, were developments from him, but they were developments. In each he was reproduced with changes. And they were not alike. They all had one spiritual origin, but they differed widely in their ways of going forth therefrom. In other words, the gift of Christ began its work by taking new forms immediately. It was altered in going from Jesus to Paul, and from Jesus to John; and the alterations in the two movements were not the same. Theological thought has always been varying, but it never showed larger variation in so short a time than between the days of Jesus and the last writing of the New Testament.

The idea that Christianity is an unchangeable deposit of doctrine was early accepted, and began to appear even within the New Testament. But instead Christianity was a living and growing power, with a method of its own. It was a body of truth, a body of reality, to be apprehended and experienced; and it was vital truth, or vital real-

ity, cast forth alive into the fertile field of life. Just for the reason that it was truth unchangeable, or reality eternal, it was suggestive in an infinite variety of ways. The one thing certain was that the gift of Christ would take an endless variety of forms. The multiplication table has but one. Large spiritual truth put into life cannot be kept uniform. So the testimony of Jesus concerning God and men made absolutely certain a long and changing course of Christian theology. Nothing so rich in life and promise of enlargement was ever cast forth into the world as the gift of Christ, and nothing is more certain than that theology, receiving so germinant and growing a force, must follow it through form after form, always the same at heart but varying with the nature and the needs of successive ages.

From this brief account of its contents let us now turn to see with what glory and power the Christian element, the gift of Christ, comes from the Scriptures into theology.

It comes as the determining element, throwing light upon the whole method of theological knowledge. From what has just been said it is plain in what manner our ideas in theology are to be obtained and our convictions established, — not

by means of direct and authoritative statements deciding each point for us, but by means of the light that is thrown upon the field by great and controlling truths. Our theological certainties are not to be dictated to us: we are to be borne on to them by the sweep of great realities. And the great reality that is to sweep us on to our certainties in theology is that truth, or body of truth, concerning God and the relations of men to him which we owe to Jesus Christ.

God is the first and the last, and our conception of God will rule our theology. It may not do so at once, for there may be many influences that keep incongruous elements for a time together; but in the end the doctrine of God will be the sun of our theological system, bringing the whole into harmony. The degree in which the doctrine of God is dominant in theology is the measure of the degree in which the mind has attained to clearness in spiritual vision and straightforwardness in thinking. A true theology is a true doctrine of God developed and applied.

When the Christian element has taken its place, we have for the sun in our system that matchless conception of God which we find in Christ. God is such a God as Jesus lived with: this is one

aspect. God is such a God as Jesus expressed: this is another. God is such a God as Jesus taught men to live with: this is yet another. When we have brought together the elements of character and relation that are thus revealed to us as belonging to God, we begin to see him as he is. That perfect goodness which Jesus helps us to see, that holiness, love, wisdom, trustworthiness, that strictness of paternal judgment, that hatred of sin, that eagerness to save, that grace unto the uttermost, — all these enter in, and of these the character is composed. Lo, this is our God. For the purposes of theology this conception of God as he is must take possession of us, until we see all things in the light of it as we see the world in the light of the sun. Then the questions of theology rise before us. Solutions of them are not dictated to us by external authority: we have to think them out in the light of God. What is the significance of man? Man is the beloved creature of such a God, bearing his likeness. What is sin? Sin is the opposite of the character of such a God, spoiling such a creature. What is salvation? Salvation is the work of such a God for such a creature against such an evil. How is salvation accomplished? If we need to know, it is accom-

plished as such a God will accomplish it. What is the divine life in man? Life with such a God, wrought by such a God. What is human destiny? It is such as such a God will provide for such a creature. What is human loss and ruin? It is separation of such a creature from such a God.

We may not be able to reach full answers to all these questions. The element of mystery lies large for us men in the field of things divine. But it is our privilege to accept such answers as spring from Jesus' doctrine of God. If someone has bequeathed us doctrine that springs from a lower conception, it is for us to decline the inheritance. Christian theology must discern the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and take doctrine from him alone. The work that is thus indicated is for us to do. It has not been done for us. We have to judge how the character and relations of God work out into the various forms of truth that we call doctrines. We have the help, negative and positive, of all that has been done before us: we have many clear words of our Lord himself, and the forms in which apostles cast the meaning of his gospel, and the long unfolding of theology through the Christian ages. But nothing that others have done exempts us from our task.

For ourselves, in our own time, we have to work out the substance of theology in the Christian light. We need have no fear that this broad and open method will leave us without doctrine. It will not yield us doctrine in formulas, but it will enrich us with vital conceptions that satisfy the inmost sense of what is good, and convictions well adapted to perform works of holy power in actual life.

When the Scriptures thus give us the Christian element as the decisive element, they help us to ground our doctrines in the only place where a sufficient foundation for doctrines so important as those of theology can be obtained. Truth concerning man, sin, salvation, duty, destiny, is rightly grounded in truth concerning God. This must be plain, when once we see how great the doctrines are. Great truth must be greatly grounded, and God alone is great enough to sustain doctrines like those of theology. How much smaller and weaker are grounds that are often offered as decisive of points in question, by way of proof-text and specific statement! — as when it is said that the question of destiny in the endless life is decided by the meaning and usage of the ambiguous word *aionios;* that

whether Jesus preached to the dead before his resurrection, and so by implication whether he opened a door of hope, is to be decided by the grammatical construction of a complicated sentence by a not very accurate writer of Greek; and that whether God needed to be reconciled to sinners as well as sinners to God, is settled by the prevailing usage, which can be only the majority usage, of certain Greek words and constructions used by Paul. Who has not felt that issues so vast cannot possibly be settled except on larger grounds than these? It is true that the value of these proofs has been found in inspiration, whereby the choice of words as well as thoughts was traced to God. Yet even then these conclusive testimonies of God could be discovered only through careful balancing of human judgment in grammar and lexicography. But the better method gives us better foundations. Whether God needs to be reconciled to sinners as well as sinners to God, depends upon what kind of God he is, and this we learn from Christ. The question of destiny in the endless life is to be determined by the character of God, with the implications that it contains as to the significance of sin, the nature of salvation, and

the relations in which men stand to him. Whether Christ preached to the dead, it may prove that we have no means of knowing, and we may not suffer from the lack. Whatever accords with Christ's doctrine of God is true in theology; whatever contradicts it is not true in theology; and wherever it is indifferent to a question and gives no light upon it, probably that question is not vital in theology. This best of foundations the abiding Christian doctrines have, that they follow by sound reason and spiritual fitness from that conception of God which we owe to Christ.

Here we should note that the Christian element that comes into theology lies in the field of religion, not of philosophy or metaphysics. The words of Jesus, his example, his redeeming power, his transforming influence, all move in that sphere of practical relation between God and men which is the sphere of religion. No recorded words of his belong to other parts of life. He has said nothing in metaphysics or philosophy. The metaphysical aspects of the truth that he uttered he has left to be thought out by men, while in religion he brought them the very fulness and glory of God.

This fact is not a veto upon metaphysics in

theology. Theology must, of course, follow the thought of divine realities into the world of metaphysics. Such work was begun before the New Testament was completed, and efforts to shut it out from theology must always fail. But we must learn that the Scriptures do not bind the metaphysical work of theology to such Hebrew metaphysics as they may contain, or to the conceptions of the first Christian century. As a matter of fact it never has been so bound, though theologians have often spoken as if it ought to be. The metaphysical thought that influences theology, both scholastic and popular, until now, is not Hebrew, or Pauline, or Johannine: it is late Greek, although it is often assumed to be of biblical origin and carry with it scriptural authority. Each age must work for itself. Our philosophical inquiries concerning God and the soul ought certainly to be pursued in the best light of our day. The Bible does not dictate metaphysical science or psychology from the past to modern thought, any more than it dictates natural science. Remnants of science upon its pages belong to their own past time, and are not taught from heaven to us. Thus if Paul had really believed in a trichotomy of human nature when he wrote

the prayer that the Thessalonians might be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit, that would not have been a divine dictation to a Christian psychologist to-day. God wishes his children to move along with their race in the acquirement of knowledge. Nevertheless, theology may well call attention to the unspeakably valuable gift that Jesus has brought to philosophy as well as to religion and daily life. To be recognized in all fields, Jesus holds up to faith and sight a living God. He takes for real, and teaches us to take for real, a God who knows and acts and cares. If there be no such God, theology must lose its being and lapse into philosophy, and religion must sink into superstition, but with such a God morality and hope belong to life forever. A great contribution Jesus made to religion, to theology, and to that universal view of things which we call philosophy, when he so calmly assumed the living Spirit whom men may call Father.

When the Christian element from the Scriptures enters thus alone to theology, it comes with power to render theology very largely independent of biblical criticism. Entirely independent of criticism it can never be, but the perilous dependence that is involved in older methods will be

no more when our principle has found its application.

As long as we think that the vital contribution comes from the Bible into theology in the form of specific statements couched in inspired words, our dependence is plain. We are compelled to grasp at words. Precision is indispensable: uncertainty checks us, and inaccuracy admitted to our work would vitiate the whole. If we are to bring anything from our Lord himself with his full authority we must know exactly what he said. So we must have our inspired documents in an authorized canon and an unquestionable text, or they will not possess full value. We become interested thus in textual criticism, hoping for certainty. Textual criticism confirms our general confidence, but slays our hope of absolute precision. And historical criticism, which is a valid science, tells us that we are less certain than we thought of the very words that he did utter: memory has not done perfect work; the church, adoring but misunderstanding, sometimes attributed to him what it supposed that he taught; later interpretations have been written back into what he said, and words have been ascribed to him that represent outcomes from his teaching but not the original teaching itself. Even

though but half of this were true, it is enough to shake our entire theology if we have built it upon the accuracy of written records. And when we have been brought into that situation we shall be sorely tempted to lie in the interest of the truth, by denying or ignoring plain facts because they undermine our method and endanger our theology.

But the magnificent gift of Jesus Christ to the world in the conception of God and the relation of men to him has been so imparted and received that it cannot be lost. It is not pinned down to accuracy of manuscripts. We are in no doubt as to what it is, in its large spiritual meaning. We have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and have followed his vital force out into the Christian life. His revelation has been raised to a height in history and experience where historical criticism upon the Gospels cannot destroy it. Not that criticism is destined to destroy the Gospels; it is changing them in our hands, but will not silence their testimony to Christ, or leave us without sound knowledge of his life. But to us, when we have learned the use of the Scriptures, it will not matter so much whether that magnificent gift has been brought to us in the very words of Jesus, or in the form of resulting words, uttered by men

who had received the gift. There is a convincing illustration close at hand. No one hesitates to take the saying, "God is love," as a keynote in theology. In these days, in fact, we rule out every theology that does not do it justice. Yet this is no written word of Jesus: it expresses a conclusion drawn by men from the effect of his revelation. It is the Christian revelation distilled through the alembic of the human spirit. But no one has ever felt that it was not just as good a Christian word as if it had been spoken by the Lord. And this illustration may introduce another. In the second lecture I quoted the great sentence, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." This saying holds rank with "God is love," as an undoubted part of that spiritual revelation which we owe to Christ. In the Fourth Gospel it is quoted as falling directly from the lips of Jesus, and it has always been regarded as his immediate utterance. But now it appears that the Fourth Gospel brings us his sayings recast by the writer: perhaps, indeed, it is the work of a later spiritual genius who portrays Jesus, and puts words in his mouth, as he conceives him, in the light of faith and love and theological reflection. In that case

this saying also, instead of being a word of Jesus, is a generalization, or deduction, resulting from the sum of Christ's revealing. And what if it is? I have seen the time when I should have thought the saying lost to theology and robbed of its revealing value if Jesus had not uttered it: but lost it would not be. Like its great companion, it expresses a central truth which Jesus so taught that men could utter it; and thus it is just as truly a part of his gift as if he had uttered it himself.

The question of the manner in which the Fourth Gospel, differing so widely from the synoptics, brings contribution to theology, is one of the outstanding questions of our time, upon which of course the present limits do not allow me to enter. Only of late has it taken rank as a question, within the knowledge of the many, but it is a question that must be freely discussed, and decided in the light of facts. Certainly the Fourth Gospel differs far from a simple narrative, and embodies what some great Christian has thought concerning Jesus. Hence its testimony must be compared with that which comes from other sources. But this we know, that it lacks nothing of being a mighty Christian word, uttering in new and lofty forms that truth concerning God

and life of which Jesus was at once revealer and revelation. And the coming of such a word as this through the soul and experience of a disciple is a mighty Christian work.

From our vision of the entering to theology of the contribution of the Scriptures we gather plainly enough by what kind of studies it is to be brought thither. This is a lesson to be learned progressively. There is a stage at which it seems that exegesis may bring over into theology what the Scriptures offer it. Learn just what the writers meant to say, and there you have the contribution, provided by them directly. There is another stage at which it is perceived that larger study, as of Biblical Theology, must intervene: the results of exegesis must be examined, classified, interpreted, handed over in due order and succession. And there is yet another stage at which it is apparent that these two processes together, indispensable as they are, come short of what is necessary. We become longingly aware of the demand for deep and true spiritual insight, the Christian heart discerning, the sympathy with the mind of Christ that will see all things in his light. We find the need also of large and generous historical perception, discernment of the

operation of living forces, power to distinguish between living truth at work and forms of words that may strive to express it, ability to read the Bible in the light of history, vision of the onward-moving God as he appears in ancient story, in Christ, in the Scriptures, and in that ordered knowledge of him which we call theology. One who would rightly use the Scriptures for theology needs an interpreter's skill, a saint's insight, and a historian's judgment.

It remains to speak of the position to which the Scriptures themselves will attain in relation to theology, when they are used in accordance with our principle.

The Scriptures themselves are a topic in theology. Every theologian has to treat of them. They will continue to be a topic there when they are used as contributing their Christian element and that alone, but in a different manner from the present, and a manner free from many of the difficulties that long experience has made familiar. The doctrine concerning the Scriptures, as it then stands in theology, will be a doctrine of their spiritual character and value, and not a doctrine of the manner in which they were composed.

We know what position the doctrine of the

Scriptures usually occupies in theology, and the reasons for it. A theologian usually defines these documents at the outset, and endeavors to show that they were written under a divine influence that rendered them infallible and authoritative. If he does not claim as much as this, he must at least tell what he does think about the inspiration of the Scriptures. Proof of inspiration stands at the front because all that follows is supposed to rest upon the evidence of these writings, which therefore must be proved sufficient to bear the weight. Those who follow this order thereby acknowledge that if they should fail to establish their doctrine of inspiration, their structure of theology would be insufficiently supported. This makes the theology no stronger than the doctrine of inspiration. Many theologians have been well aware that their work would be inconclusive if this doctrine did not stand, and have therefore given the more earnest heed to define and support an infallible inspiration in their sacred documents.

But theories of inspiration have lately been passing out of sight. Modern examination of the Bible proceeds mainly without reference to them. Dr. Sanday's book on Inspiration, embodying the

Bampton Lectures of 1893, is the last important book on the subject, and it does not seem probable that any other discussion from an equally scholarly source will soon appear. It is coming to be noticed that about the actual writing of these sacred books we can discover very little. The authors are largely unknown. Inductive study of the books yields no clear information as to the nature and degree of divine influence under which they were composed, and deductive arguments, or *a priori* theories, prove nothing in such a case. So more and more the Scriptures are being examined and used in the light of what they are actually found to be, not in view of the manner in which they were composed. Not as documents classed beforehand as unlike all others are they coming to offer themselves to theology, but as documents to be used like others where they are found like others, and as unlike where they are found unlike. Doubtless this is a revolution that will not go backward. Some of us have lived from the days when Smith's Bible Dictionary was a slightly advanced publication to the days when the Hastings Dictionary of the Bible is conservative; and we do not expect the movement to be reversed. The treatment of the Bible in the historical light and

not in view of exceptional inspiration is the method of the future, — or rather it is the method of to-day. If theology does not wish to lose touch with the biblical studies upon which it is dependent, it must accept the new way.

Many expect this process to lead to abandonment of the Scriptures, through denial of their value; but in fact it leads in quite the opposite direction. It gives the Scriptures their standing in theology, and in life, on the ground of their intrinsic value, discovered as value is normally discovered by men. Not because of an inspiration that eludes us when we seek to define it, but because of a testimony to God of the very highest order, confirmed in life as forever true, is the Bible to be prized. What Richard Rothe said will come true: — "Let the Bible go forth into Christendom as it is in itself, as a book like other books, without allowing any dogmatic theory to assign it a reserved position in the ranks of books: let it accomplish what it can of itself through its own character and through that which each man can find in it for himself: and it will accomplish great things." This is a better word of faith than any that insists upon an outward badge of divineness on the Bible, and it is the

only word that is worthy of men who believe the Bible to be in any high sense from God. Surely God would not send forth a book in which this normal and healthy power of winning moral victories did not reside.

The theology that is built on the Christian element in the Scriptures will not be dependent upon any theory of inspiration. It will have no need to define the inspiration under which the Bible was written, and will not stand upon the precarious ground of such definition. It will need no section on the inspiration of the Scriptures. This will be no loss, — it will be a gain. I have often told my students that I could show them the divine value of the Bible far more convincingly if I could simply exhibit to them the Bible itself, without being obliged to use at all the ancient, ambiguous, confusing word "inspiration." The word has lost its clearness without losing its claim: it bears the urgency of sacred tradition after definableness has forsaken it: it is now an enemy to clear thought, and a misleading guide to reverence for the Scriptures. It will be a good day for theology, and for religion, when we fearlessly take the Bible for exactly what it is, with an abiding value resident in itself, and let it

serve us as the reporter of Christ and the bearer of his revelation of God.

Neither, at that day, will theology be dependent upon any closely-defined doctrine of the Canon. If we hold a doctrine of infallible inspiration, giving to the Scriptures alone the full authority of God, it is indispensable that we know by God's own testimony what these Scriptures are. A doctrine of exclusive inspiration must be supported by the doctrine of an unquestionable Canon, or it will be no sure doctrine of divine authority. It is very remarkable, as I have already said, that discussions of inspiration have so frequently ignored the equally important companion-question of the Canon, assuming that the Protestant Canon is correct and divinely authorized. Yet assumption is easier than proof, for the history of the Canon disappoints the hope of finding divine authority in selection of the books. But when theology is using the Scriptures simply as bearer of the Christian element and message, it is free to regard the Canon as a historical fact, and not as a crucial point in present doctrine. The Canon was formed by the judgment of the church, and we inherit it: we do not have to form it now, or to vindicate the manner in which it was formed of

old. If the latest questions in forming it had been decided differently, the Christian message would have been the same. Nothing depends for theology upon the canonicity of Esther or the Song of Songs, of the Apocalypse or Second Peter, — all of them once disputed books. If the discussion over the Apocalypse had ended in its omission from the Canon, it would still have been the same book, and would have taught us what it teaches now. Apart from all these questions, the foundation of theology stands sure, in the spiritual revelation and gift of Christ, which is known from its quality, not from the choice of sacred books in the religion to which it gave birth. If it should prove that the choice might have been better made, some structures of theology might tremble, but not that which is built upon the Christian element in the Scriptures.

When we use the Bible thus, we find the true meaning and use of Authority. Authority belongs in the relation between God and us, and only there. Authority appeals to persons, in their personal life. It is correlative to heart and will and loyalty, not to opinion, or even to belief. In theology and religion the idea of authority has

been made to cover far too wide a field. It has been conceived as requirement of assent, alike in matters great and small. The Bible has been supposed to possess divine authority in support of all its statements, whether concerning the history of Israel, the temptation of Job, the longevity of the patriarchs, or the love of God. It has been accounted a part of religion to believe that Ruth married Boaz, that Paul suffered shipwreck, and that the genealogies in Luke and Matthew are correct. Many evils have come of this, of which one is that the majestic strength of divine authority has been set to support weights unworthy of its greatness. By the doctrine of authority and an equal Bible God has been called to witness respecting matters with which the soul is not concerned, and about which it is not possible to feel that he requires of us a belief. God should not be invoked as witness except in matters of eternal moment, for we cannot really believe that he would offer his authority for determination of any other. In matters of history and ordinary opinion, knowledge of facts is the only authority that exists: God himself has no other to offer us. His authority moves in another realm, and when we set it in the light of the Christian element we see what it

means. That God whom Christ makes known has authority upon us: he claims us and has full right to call us to himself: he is the God whom we have no right to disregard or treat disloyally. His authority is in himself: his is the will that we are bound to do, and his the work from which we must not turn away. And the truth that Christ tells us concerning him comes home to us with God's own authority because it is his truth; and Christ in uttering it speaks with God's authority, as his hearers perceived, and is One whose word and call it is our bounden duty to obey; and the Bible itself, so far as it brings us that supreme utterance, comes with the authority of truth, of Christ, and of God. It is not quite enough to say with Coleridge that I know the Bible to be divine because it finds me. It has the right to find me, — that is the real point. No one has ever attributed to the Bible an independent authority of its own: always it has been the sovereign voice of God that sounded through it. Even so it is. That sovereign voice does sound in the Bible, in the field in which God desires to exercise authority upon the human soul, the field of relation with himself.

Thus we are enabled to see clearly what is the one limitation that is upon us in the construction of our Christian theology. There is a limitation, but it is not in the form of a biblical veto upon theological thought. God has acted here as everywhere, — he has given truth, not as a deposit, but as seed for the bearing of harvests. He has not said to any student of divine things, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther." He opens to us the universe and eternity. The limit that we are to observe is not set by measuring the dimensions of the Bible over upon our field. It is set by the character of the glorious God himself as in Christ we know it. Our theology must be Christian, that is all, — that is, it must set forth the right God. The true light now shineth, and in it we are to walk. Yet this is no arbitrary limitation, dictated through command; it is a warning that otherwise we cannot get it right, since the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God who exists. Nor is this a restraint: it is an infinite enlargement. God desires us to be in such harmony with his high character as to give the name of truth only to that which corresponds thereto. With vision thus purified, theology will go on forever seeing more and more of that eternal glory

which is practical truth for daily life, and gaining more light upon the mysteries that make life perplexing to the soul.

Before I leave the subject I must speak for a moment of the widespread need of the principle in the use of the Scriptures which I have been commending. There is scarcely anything that the Christian world needs more.

I tell no secret — though perhaps many a man has wished he could keep it a secret — when I say that to the average minister to-day the Bible that lies on his pulpit is more or less an unsolved problem. He is loyal to it, and not for his right hand would he degrade it or do it wrong. He longs to speak with authority on the basis of its teaching, and feels that he ought to be able so to do. He knows that the people need its message in full power and clearness, and cannot bear to think that it is losing influence with them. Yet he is not entirely free to use it. Criticism has altered the book for his use, but just how far he does not know. Experience has altered it also. Parts of it do not strike his soul with the force of spiritual authority, as other parts do, or yield themselves to such use as he or his fathers

formerly made of them. Parts are inexpressibly rich and glorious. He is supposed to use it throughout as God's very word to men now living, and he retains the feeling that he ought, but he cannot. So he leaves some parts unused, and is not quite sure how much of the remainder he may freely wield as the sword of the Spirit. Yet he must use his Bible constantly, and make proclamation of what it contains, and he deeply wishes that he had sure ground for a practice that would satisfy his intelligence, his conscience, and his Christian heart. Some ministers do not feel thus, but many do. They are not irreligious or unbelieving, either, though some of their brethren may account them so. They are perplexed in the presence of an unsolved problem.

There is a common experience that may suggest relief. It is matter of common experience that every lover of the Bible analyzes the book into its elements as best he can, and has for himself a little Bible of his own making within the Bible, which he loves, reads, and remembers far beyond the rest. Do we not know this for ourselves? One who has not done this is thereby revealed as only a cool reader, not a lover of the book. Let the worn edges of any well-used Bible tell their

story. The four Gospels, the Acts, most of the Epistles, the finest of the Psalms, the latter part of Isaiah, passages here and there through the remainder of the book, differing in every case, these make up each one's personal edition of the Holy Scriptures, — these make a smaller but dearer Bible for every one of us, and for all readers who are enamored of the divine message. This distinguishing and selecting we have always done because we could not help it: it was a part of real life and love. But we have done it more or less against our principles, — that is, against our theories, — for the Bible that we have thus treated with the favoritism of intelligent interest was supposed to have one equal claim throughout upon our reverence and attention. But we have done right: now let us do the same thing better. Let us do it on principle, intelligently, without timid hesitation, and for all uses, whether private or public. The ministry needs to do exactly this, and such application of our principle will bring relief to its perplexity. Frankly and fearlessly differentiate the Bible into its elements, Christian, Jewish, historical, traditional, and whatever they may be. Let the mountains rise, let the valleys sink, to the place that God has ordained

for them. Set by itself that body of truth which our Saviour taught concerning God and religion, and then give glory where glory is due. Put the Bible to its true use, as servant of Jesus Christ. Speak with authority the truth concerning God and man which he revealed, for this you have full right to do. Proclaim the Christian thought in its fulness without doubting or apology, for it is true forever. But do not claim or represent or imply that everything in the Bible is true forever, or bears the authority of God for living men to-day. Never speak as if it were so, or encourage the people to believe it. Accept no obligation to make non-Christian matter Christian, or to keep alive what Christ has done to death. Let the past be past and the present present, the human human and the divine divine. When you have helped the Christian element in the Scriptures to come to its own, you will have your word of power, differing from everything else in divine energy. Then, too, the real value of the elements that seem discarded through discrimination will begin to be perceived, and the usefulness of them for illustration of the Christian message will be rightly learned. That which out of its place has been an embarrassment will be in its place a help;

and so in due time the book that has lain an unsolved problem on the pulpit will be again, and will continue, an instrument of power.

The Sunday school needs as keenly as the pulpit to accept our principle and put the Christian element in the Scriptures in a place of honor by itself. For a generation now, though of late with increasing exceptions, the Sunday schools have been using the Bible as one solid whole, which they treated as a uniform and equal book. To go through it in so many years has been one of the ideals in method. So there has been a quarter's lessons in the Christian message, and then another, frequently, where the Christian element is least. Meanwhile it has been constantly maintained that the Sunday school was intended to teach religion, and the Christian religion, and lead the pupils directly to the Christian life. Along with this avowed purpose, the management of the lessons has been such as to lead people to suppose that they were all the time studying religion, and Christianity, and lingering Sunday by Sunday near the gates of sound conversion to Christ. But much of the time they have been doing nothing of the kind: they have been studying only history, or traditions, or institutions once con-

nected with religion, or religion in superseded forms. Sometimes they have studied matter incredible as history, but urged as history upon their belief by the authority of an equal inspiration. Christian matter and non-Christian have been confounded, and even practically identified, by this long misuse. Not far in the future the day will come when the people find this out; and unless the lesson-makers hear the warning in season, by and by there will come a great reaction of weariness against the unreality of work that thus claims to be more religious, and more Christian, than it really is. If the Sunday-school work is not to be turned into a pathetic failure, the lesson-makers must face the difficult problem of distinguishing the Christian element in the Scriptures from everything else, and setting it forth in its own superiority and spiritual power. The problem of bringing this true distinction to its place in the minds of the people is a difficult one in any case, and it is the harder because the Sunday school itself has long been systematically inculcating the doctrine that must now be unlearned. But there is no other way than to mark the distinction between these things that so widely differ, and let the distinction do its work. Some

may fear the undertaking as if it were infidelity, but in fact it is the best safeguard against infidelity.

The need of the ministry and the Sunday school is the need of all the people also. For want of distinguishing the Christian element from everything else that the Bible contains, the Christian people are suffering far more than they know, and with them is suffering the name and power of popular Christianity. They are aware of perplexities for which there is really no relief but this; but this way of relief they have not yet put to the test, and for the most part they are afraid of it. There is a vast amount of honest Christian faith practically founded on the Bible, when it ought to be founded directly on God. Is it not founded on the Bible? for if people are asked why they hold their Christian faith, they will answer that these things are so because the Bible tells them so: it is through the Bible that they know them, and because of the Bible that they believe them. Their faith is precious, and they must keep it, but in order to keep it they must keep the Bible just as it is; and in order to keep the Bible just as it is they feel that they must believe all that is necessary to that end. It is in

this way that so many unimportant beliefs come to be taken for a part of religion. There are earnest souls that assent to many a belief that would otherwise be impossible to them, lest without it they should lose their Bible. Since on the Bible rests their faith, they account it a duty and privilege to accept anything that they must, lest their Bible should slip away. And then they meet with changes in knowledge of the Bible, and learn that some of their beliefs, incidental in real value but not to them, are doubtful, and are told that more changes are to come; and then their faith trembles lest it should perish, and they do not know exactly what it needs in order to be made strong and free again. So they maintain their Bible the more strenuously, perhaps by arguments that will not hold, and reassert their faith with an apparent strength that is really an expression of its weakness. Most sincerely do I wish that this description could be proved untrue, but I know that it cannot.

How much better would it be if their faith rested directly upon the real object of faith! The object of faith is God. What the troubled faith needs is to change its basis, to transfer itself from one foundation to another. The present

generation of Christians scarcely needs anything else more than to change the foundation of its faith from the Bible to God. Yet perhaps those who need it most would be puzzled to know just what this would be. I have told students of this great necessity, and been met in reply by the question, "But what do we know of God, except through the Bible?" Yes, and what do we know of the star except by help of the telescope? — and yet the telescope is not the star, and we need not be told that the telescope is given us in order that the star may be revealed. The Bible is the telescope, and God is the star, the sun. The Bible is a means, not an end; a help to faith, not an object of faith. We wrong it if we make it the foundation of our faith: God must be foundation, as well as object. It is the one thing needful, not that we keep our Bible, but that we keep our God. We must know him as in Christ he is, and must know no other. If you say to me, "This I must believe and this reject, lest I lose my Bible," I say to you in answer, "This I must believe and this reject, lest I lose my God," — lest I fail to mark him as he is in Christ, but get some false conception of him, and bind to my heart some image of God that is unlike the living One whom

in Christ we know. Knowledge of him as he is in Christ is what the Bible was given to bring us. If in any of its parts it brings us anything different, it is our Christian privilege and duty to mark the difference. If anything in the Bible obscures the Christian thought of God, it is no part of the abiding Christian gift; let it not trouble you: leave it aside if it darkens that divine face which Christ reveals. This is what the Christian people need to learn. We must transfer our faith from the book that reveals God in Christ, to God in Christ whom the book reveals, — from the telescope to the sun. When we have done this, our Christian faith will rest upon a foundation that will stand forever.

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